State of Qatar
Ministry of Awqaf & Islamic Affairs

CONTEMPORARY ISLAMIC DISCOURSE

A Call for Evaluation & Reconsideration

A Selection of Researchers and Writers

WAQF BY SHEIKH ALI IBN ABDULLAH AL THANI
RESEARCH AND STUDIES CENTER



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الخطاب الثقافي، الذي تضطلع به «مدرسة الأمة» موجّهٌ للناس جميعاً، وليس خاصاً بالمسلمين، انطلاقاً من الخطاب القرآني: «يا أيها الناس...».. ولعل المترجم لم يقدِّر ذلك، فأعطى نفسه الحق في عدم ترجمة بعض العبارات فاجتزأ بعضها من سياقها وعدل عن ترجمتها؛ لأنها لا تصلح في نظره لخطاب غير المسلم، علماً بأن الكثير من المسلمين يتحدثون الإنجليزية والفرنسية؛ الأمر الذي لم يمكن استدراكه بعد أن انتهت الطباعة.

The «Cultural Discourse» adopted «Ommah School» is meant to address all humanity, not Muslims only. In this issue, we spring from the Quranic address: «O, Mankind! ...»

But, the problem is that the translator didn't take it into consideration and maybe he gave himself the right not to translate some phrases and sentences extracting some of them from their real context. The Translator, in his own view, sees what he has extracted isn't fit for non-Muslims although there are lots of English and French speaking Muslims.

Now, the translator's fault cannot be avoided.

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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

وَشَدَدْنَا مُلْكَهُ وَءَاتَيْنَٰهُ الْحِكْمَةَ وَفَصْلَ الْخِطَابِ

(ص : ٢٠)

﴿*And We strengthened his kingdom and gave him wisdom and sound judgment in discourse and decision*﴾ **[Sâd: 20]**



His Highness
Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani
Amir of the State of Qatar



His Highness

Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani

The Heir Apparent

Introduction

Minister of Endowments and Islamic Affairs

Praise be to Allah Who has raised up the best nation to adhere to the Glorious Qur'ân and determined its means (of transferring the message) to be based on "conveying the message in a clear way." Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴾***...The Messenger's duty is only to convey (the message) in a clear way (i.e., to preach in a plain way).***﴿ [An-Nûr (The Light):54]

Allah, Glory be to Him, started the final message with the word ***"Recite!"*** so reading and knowledge are the key to understand this religion (i.e., Islam) and the pillars of the Islamic culture. Moreover, Allah, the Almighty, regulated *Jihâd* (fighting in the cause of Allah) to be in line with what is stated in the Qur'ân. Allah, the Most High, says: ﴾ ***So do not obey the disbelievers, and strive against them with it [i.e. the Qur'ân] a great striving.***﴿ [Al-Furqân (The Criterion): 52]

Allah also says: ﴾***We are most knowing of what they say, and you are not over them a tyrant. But remind by the Qur'ân whoever fears My threat.***﴿ [Qâf: 45]

Verily, adherence to the values of the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah* was and still is the way before the Muslim nation to reach superiority and cultural supremacy. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴾***And indeed, it is a remembrance for you and your people, and you [all] are going to be questioned.***﴿ [Az-Zukhruf (Decoration): 44]

Peace and blessing be upon the instructive Messenger and Imâm of eloquence whom Allah distinguished by sending the Revelation down to him to convey it to the people and clarify what was revealed to them. Allah, the Most High, says: ﴿ ***...And We revealed to you the Message [i.e. the Qur'ân] that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them...*** ﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees):44]

In fact, good words, clear explanations, *Da'wah* (Calling others to Islam) with wisdom, good instruction and using a line of reasoning in a most benevolent way were the Messenger's means to reach the minds and hearts of all the people in order to move them out of the darkness of ignorance into the light of Faith.

This is the 5th issue in the series of our worldwide, educational and extensive projects. It bears the title ***"Contemporary Islamic Discourse: A Call for Evaluation & Reconsideration"***. This book comes during this current critical era with all of its cultural and political aspects entailing conferences and dialogue seminars held at regional and international levels. It also comes at a time characterized by slogans of cooperation, coexistence and partnership, attempting to establish the human universalities and spread the culture of dialogue, understanding and acceptance of the other. Moreover, this project is introduced in an era which witnesses numerous forms of confrontations and practices of suppression and dominance that occur under various names, slogans and claimed justifications. Furthermore, this era witnesses a political and cultural transaction that combines two contradicting matters: (a) affirming that the conflict of civilizations is a tangible reality, and (b) calling for mutual understanding, cooperation, dialogue among cultures and acknowledgment of the human and cultural diversity which leads to cultural enrichment, sustainable development, recognition of human rights and elimination of all forms of discrimination.

This era, with all its characteristics, aspects and consequences, requires a discourse that suits the nature of this period. This cannot happen unless one realizes and comprehends the dimensions of this period. This must be followed by a heedful plan and strategy, in which a group of scientific and cognitive specialists participate, taking into account the cultural capacity of the Muslims, the surrounding environment they live in, the culture they can provide, the role they can play and the effective, legal and suitable mediums and mechanisms which are available for them to use in such a period.

One can say that such an era of globalization has opened all doors, but, in the meantime, it has made all the ways open for us to convey the merciful Islamic values to all the people. Consequently, we have the ability to ensure the deliverance and spread of Islam, which is the mission of the Prophets and anyone who follows their way and carries their message.

This is because the core of the Prophetic Message is to convey and explain the values of the Revelation, since Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿ ***...And We revealed to you the message [i.e. the Qur'ân] that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them ...*** ﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees): 44]

Moreover, the basis of the Prophetic Message is to ensure a clear "Islamic Discourse" which suits all conditions and variables, and conveys the Islamic values to humans in every time and every place.

Undoubtedly, establishing a clear discourse, a clear deliverance of the Islamic Message, and effective and suitable media is not easy or impromptu and cannot be fulfilled by just loud voices. Rather, they are the fruits of certain specialized sciences and cognitive, social and human knowledge in addition to the presence of scientific and objective criteria which are needed for evaluation and assessment. One may say that mass media represents a branch of knowledge by itself. This comes as no surprise, since the science of *Al-Balâghah* (eloquence), in our Arabic scientific and cultural heritage, is one of the sciences that help provide a good style of speech.

In fact, eloquence means the harmony between a discourse and the conditions in which it takes place. There is a great deal of science and knowledge required for the *Fiqh* of Reality or the *Fiqh* of Conditions. After this is obtained, a type of discourse suiting this reality and condition may be chosen.

It becomes more serious and important when the condition, that is to be studied and then disseminated on the international level, concentrates on the issue of cultural effectiveness, change, interaction and dialogue or even cultural conflict and struggle in thought, culture and media.

If we consider the media flow and the quick pace accompanied by the shortening of time and space, and the resulting world changes that are hard to be pursued and absorbed – not to mention the inability to contribute to them or change their direction – we will realize the difficulty of the mission as well as the development, change, advancement and reformation needed for "Islamic Discourse" today.

Since change is the rule of life at the individual, group, society and world levels, it is thus a *Shar'î* necessity, *Da'wah* prerequisite, social tradition and cultural duty to continue studying the suitability, development and advancement of this discourse. This is because the reformation of Islamic Discourse and the development of the means of conveying the Message (Islam) are, in fact, a *Shar'î* obligation and human *Ijtihâd* (legal reasoning and discretion) that experience change, modification, reformation, and right and wrong techniques. They do not possess the traits of holiness or infallibility.

The call for reforming the "Islamic Discourse" and continuing to develop it, evaluate its quality, check its effectiveness and test its suitability for the rushing variables of the day are important issues. In fact, these issues require much contemplation and scrutiny to clarify the confusion surrounding Islamic Discourse and return it to its natural position. After this reform, Islamic Discourse will be purified from any defects and released from any shackles that cause its present rigidity and prevent it from coping with the current changes. In this way, the purified Islamic Discourse can play its fruitful role anew.

Here, we see the importance and necessity of differentiating between the following:

a- The infallible and eternal "Discourse of Islam", that knows no boundaries of time or place and can be found in the Revelation (i.e., the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*).

b- The "Islamic Discourse" or "Muslims' Discourse" which springs from the "Discourse of Islam", which can be altered to suit any particular time, and which entails *Ijtihâd* (legal reasoning and discretion) in order to choose appropriate means and mechanisms, to develop plans and programs and introduce concepts and terms that attempt to disseminate and convey the Message of Islam to all the peoples and exhort them to embrace it.

"Muslims' Discourse" is a kind of self-developing *Ijtihâd* which is open to change, revival and review in the light of recent developments and changes. Moreover, it is a human production that is framed by and based on the Revelation with the purpose of constructing the discourse process in accordance with the *Fiqh* of reality and its requirements in every time and place. Thereupon, believing that the "Islamic Discourse" is infallible, unchangeable and unalterable, as is the case with the "Discourse of Islam",

is a mistake that will lead to a great deal of backwardness and intellectual disability.

Again, we reemphasize that the Muslim civilization has produced the best nation ever through the discourse of Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. Moreover, the mission of the Prophet (PBUH) has been outlined as being based on clear deliverance and notification. The development and representation of this clear notification have become an independent branch of knowledge in the Muslims' heritage (i.e., referred to as "Eloquence"). Unfortunately, this science has not been extended, reformed or developed as it should have been in order to cope with Islam and the contemporary age. Today, media has become the messenger, mirror and tongue of human civilization and a branch of knowledge served by various sciences.

As a matter of fact, our way to deliver a sound *Da'wah* and clear notification is by using good words that spring from the knowledge of the Revelation and the values of the Qur'ân. Good words grow and advance with time. Hence, how are we supposed to form this kind of discourse?

Verily, good words, clear notification, faith and conviction in a climate of freedom and human dignity should be the means of *Da'wah*, as Allah, the Most High, says: ﴿***There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion...***﴾ [Al-Baqarqh (The Cow): 256]

To illustrate, 'words' form and develop the intellect of man, and constitute human behavior, whereas the use of power, violence and coercion dishonors man and disturbs his life.

Reformation of the Islamic Discourse that is in line with the greatness of Islam and copes with the modern age is the only way to retain effectiveness, spread *Da'wah*, disseminate religion and develop the nation. This is based on the fact that civilization has proved that the advancement of the Islamic nation depends on the presence of the conditions that were present when it first emerged and the adherence to the footsteps of the first generations of Islam. In this connection, Imâm Mâlik said: "There is no way to reform the recent generations of this nation except when they follow the footsteps of the early generations."

We do not claim that this "Collective Cultural Project" covers all aspects of the problem under discussion. We have just opened the door for discussion and brought the issue to light in an attempt to retain the effectiveness of Islamic discourse, form the mentality of evaluation and reconsideration of its reality, reveal the cause behind its failure to convey the values of Islam to humanity and possess the ability to overcome

the deficiencies afflicting the "Contemporary Islamic Discourse" which prevent it from reaching the desired level of production.

We admit that the issue at hand is open by itself and cannot be tackled in a book or even a collection of books, but we have tried to bring it into the arena of thought, consideration and *Ijtihâd*. Our efforts are meant to bring the cultural state, the reality of the Muslim world and the essence of the elite Islamic thinkers into the highlight. This, in our eyes, is a great step on the way to reach a solution and one of the signs of cultural action.

On this occasion, I give all my thanks and due respect to **His Highness *Sheikh Hamad Ibn Khalîfah Âl Thânî* (may Allah protect him)** for his continuous encouragement and support for these projects. Also, we thank him for his active follow-up of the projects and for ordering them to be translated into several contemporary languages so the benefits reach many people. Moreover, we should not forget his constant recommendations to make room for participation in and contribution to such projects.

I do not want to forget to express our appreciation to the writers and researchers, who have exerted outstanding efforts to achieve this commendable project. I also direct my thanks to our brothers in Qatar's Research and Studies Center who have undertaken the burden of this work, despite the modest capabilities that were available.

All praise be to Allah, the Lord of all the worlds!

About the Book

The book at hand, «***Contemporary Islamic Discourse: A Call for Evaluation & Reconsideration***», is the fifth collective cultural project in our extended and promising cultural series. These series introduce a forum for discussion, culture, thought, review, criticism and evaluation of complex issues from which the Muslim nation suffers.

Naturally, these issues require a group of various cognitive and scientific specializations in order to be tackled fully from different perspectives.

The ideal, perfect solution we pursue may not be entirely available in one specialization or with one person, regardless of his knowledge or title.

Rather, this solution most probably will be the fruit of collective efforts, studies and various scientific and cognitive specializations. In addition, this arouses a common sense of responsibility for the Muslim nations' problems and prevents any intervention by those who do not have the necessary knowledge or suitable qualifications, so as to avoid controversy, the spread of disability and ignorance, and a breakup of social and culture relationships. This is due to the fact that such an intervention throws the nation into a state of mental disability, a tendency to release oneself from responsibility, effectiveness and action, and a state of waiting for a leader to rescue them.

It may be necessary to point out that these difficult and complex problems are open, extending and developing issues since they represent the main social, cultural and political drives of the nation. Accordingly, such problems require study, penetrating insight and suitable specializations in order to avoid illusion and deception, or else we would be like those concerning whom Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***Rather, they have denied that which they encompass not in knowledge and whose interpretation has not yet come to them...***﴾ [Yûnus (Jonah): 39]

We should not let our intellectual efforts in the study and examination of the issue turn into an attempt to defend ourselves and search for unconvincing excuses to exempt ourselves from bearing the responsibility of our negligence and fault.

Perhaps one of the most serious and prominent intellectual diseases, regarding the examination of the difficult issues we face, is our daringness to attempt to deal with these issues without having the knowledge,

specialization or proper tools required for studying and analyzing the nature and structure of such issues. To illustrate, the fever of speech, passion and loud voices are still overwhelming us, while we actually lack the mentality of experts and wise people that will change us from mere speakers to achievers and provide us with science and knowledge to avoid dealing with issues we ignore. Consequently, our efforts will be focused on learning what we have so far failed to understand.

In the beginning, we would like to admit that such problems and issues cannot be encompassed by one book, whatever its size, or be tackled by a select group of writers, whatever their various specializations. These issues and problems are not limited to one time, excluding other times.

Also, these issues are open for consideration, evaluation and review. They are among the psychological problems that reveal new wonders every time they are examined, such as the case with scientific investigations that keep discovering, completing, verifying, modifying and, sometimes, replacing facts. In fact, how much more for the problems and issues in which man is the core of the examination and study, while – at the same time – he is the examiner?! In this regard, Allah, the Most High, says:

﴿***We will show them our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...***﴾ [Fussilat (Expounded):53]

Here, the continuity of observing and discovering is the operative motive, the fervid spirit in the nation, and the means of progress and advancement.

The Islamic discourse we intend here is *Ijtihâd* (legal reasoning and discretion) and human understanding of the texts of Qur'ân and *Sunnah* and applying them to all situations in actual life, according to the time and place. In this connection, we do not refer to only the discourse of legislative *Fiqh* (jurisprudence) and its aspects relating to acts of worship, and lawful and unlawful matters, but we also refer to the human production and understanding in applying the principles and values of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* to all aspects of life, including political, social, economical, educational and administrative fields. Moreover, we refer to any production or understanding based on or issued from the Islamic values and knowledge of the Revelation. This kind of understanding is liable to examination, testing, modification, replacement, criticism, evaluation and revision due to its human nature, which may turn out to be right or wrong, and which may be affected by circumstances of time and place.

Human production was described as "Islamic production" since it springs from and relates to Islamic values. Therefore, these Islamic values are regarded as the standards in evaluating such human production in all fields of life. Describing it as "Islamic Production" does not provide it with a sanctity and protection from being reviewed, discussed and modified, similar to the case of Islamic discourse. That is, the Islamic values are different from the various forms of religiousness, which is emphasized in the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*.

The problem occurs when the values of religion are confused with the forms of religiousness, or when the self is mixed up with the values, so the self becomes the standard. Consequently, some kinds of religious priesthood appear, and a climate of false religiousness prevails and surrounds the human *Ijtihâd* with some sort of sanctity and protection from being reviewed or discussed. As a result, there begins a state of intellectual terrorism that may be more dangerous than tyranny and political terrorism. Hence, the religious values turn into a means of backwardness instead of progress.

Unfortunately, some contributions show some signs of intellectual diseases as well as mere ways of thinking and reconsideration. However, it is satisfactory for us that we have presented some patterns of the mentality of the well-cultured and the thinkers to be an indicator of the intellectual state we have experienced so that it may be examined and discussed. The reason is that some leaders and officials have become, due to partial, sectarian or domestic considerations, similar to walls surrounding the nation's intellect and thought. Thus, they may unconsciously represent a part of the problem.

The problem may develop to become an incurable crisis. Moreover, the process of renewing the Islamic discourse may be obstructed and the path of reform has to be determined by replacing the elite intellectuals and thinkers. Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***...And if you turn away [i.e. refuse], He will replace you with another people; then they will not be the likes of you.***﴾ [Muhammad: 38]

In fact, the bad condition we suffer represents an example of the disability, weakness and futile solutions of those who are called "the elite".

With this in mind, we think that the elite in some Islamic countries have turned from being a source of hope, providing solutions for the problems of backwardness, to being a problem themselves. In other words, the desired solution has become a complex dilemma. This is because the generalization of the word "elite" includes many of those in charge in many fields, if not all. This is an inaccurate and misleading matter which results in accumulated disability and backwardness. In fact, those called "elite" have not been chosen by the nation, as their title may imply, nor elected in view of their capabilities, programs and experience, nor selected as a result of equal opportunities which make room for real capabilities to appear. Furthermore, they have not been elected through the natural law of evolvement nor chosen according to cultural interaction laws, social laws and objective standards. Rather, they have been elected for many reasons that have no relation to the basic points involved in any election process. Thus, election, as it is now, may put illegible, unqualified persons in authority to bear responsibility and deal with crises. Consequently, this kind of election becomes an obstacle in the way of progress.

This is not restricted to one field, even if it is clearer in one place more than another. The bad condition and state which produce "elites" are the fruits

of the same mentality, and thus the hope of leaving the tunnel of backwardness continues to diminish. That is why the world around us is developing and progressing while we are not, except for small aspects of progress that are offered to us by others. In addition, we exhaust our energies in fighting democracy under the illusion of defending the values of consultation, which it lacks. Hereupon, the battle is used for the benefit of political tyranny, or at best the legitimacy and rulings of consultation are focused on while its practice is neglected. Also, studying and verifying the *Shar'ī* texts and talking about their greatness replaces how to actually apply them. Now, we encounter the argument stating: Is reform coming from the outside or from the inside? The final result is that there is no reform at all.

Another case that we think is important to be pointed out is that we have presented focal points for the subject so that contributions and papers may be introduced within the presented context. Nevertheless, we may not be surprised – while being a part of the cultural reality – to find many points that lack objectiveness when tackling this phenomenon. That is, many of us are still controlled by the illusion that all words fit every situation. Some of us still deliver sermons with their pens the same way as they do with their tongues, through their deeds and by their support.

Perhaps this book requires the readers to think as they read. The pages of the book are designed to arouse reflection, not to help one relax. It is an attempt to refresh public awareness, arouse thought, and provide training on techniques in examining, analyzing, considering outcomes as well as creating critical minds capable of distinguishing between infallible religious values and fallible forms of religiousness.

In this context, we would like to emphasize that the proposed opinions and deductions stated in this book do not necessarily represent the Ministry's views. Actually, some of them may not represent the Ministry at all. These views (stated in the book) are the objects of study and they represent an opportunity for exploring the intellectual arena.

This book, with all of its contributions, provides a space for talking, exchanging views and exercising minds. It is not a book of *Fiqh* that determines rulings pertaining to what is lawful and what is unlawful.

On this occasion, we would like to thank the writers and researchers who have contributed to this work. Also, we are grateful to the staff of the Research and Studies Center due to their participation in completing this book, in spite of the difficult conditions and the modest human capabilities.

We ask Allah, Exalted be He, to make this work useful and make it a right step on the long way. We also ask Him to make it a distinguished explanation and penetrating insight into this serious era of the journey of mankind. We hope that this work will help the contemporary Muslims to undertake their message and convey it to all the people in order to bestow mercy upon them.

Allah is the best to be asked for help!

Contemporary Islamic Discourse
A Call for Evaluation & Reconsideration

Main Points

*** First Point: The Meanings of Terms**

- Confusion of Concepts.
- Methodology of Islamic Discourse.
- References of Discourse.
- Arts of Discourse.

*** Second Point: Discourse Not Confrontation**

- Reforming Concepts and Generating Terms.
- Distinguishing between Religion and Religiousness in Islamic Discourse (Difference between the Self and Values).
- Mastering the Tools of Discourse.
- Knowing the Terms Used by the "Other".
- Acknowledging the "Other" and Adhering to the Ethics of Controversy.

*** Third Point: Characteristics of Islamic Discourse**

- Self-oriented Discourse and the Other-oriented Discourse.
- Launching Some of the Taken-for-Granted Facts.
- Islamic Discourse: Reality and Ideality.
- Islamic Discourse: Dictation and Thinking.
- Contextual Appropriateness: Educational, Political, Public Opinion Mobilization, etc.

*** Fourth Point: Problems of Islamic Discourse**

- Changelessness and Rigidity of Islamic Discourse Regardless of the Developing Society and Changing Problems.
- Dualism: The State and Religion; the Present Life and the Hereafter; Religious Sciences and Modern Sciences, etc.
- Absence of Effectiveness and Specialization.
- Defensive Discourse and the Reaction of "Others".
- Confusion between Self-oriented Discourse and Discourse Orientated to the Other View.
- Discourse of Crisis and Crisis of Discourse.
- Going in Vicious Circles and Reproducing the Past.

*** Fifth Point: The Role of Discourse in the Cultural Formation and Revival of the Nation**

- Historical Examination of the Role of Discourse.
- Concept of Discourse and Its Various Dimensions (Word, Pen, Color, Picture, Sound, etc.).
- Culture of Discourse and Cultural Discourse.
- Relation between Knowledge and Authority: Educator and Politician; Nation and State.
- Universality and Humanity of Discourse.
- Discourse: *Shar'î* Text and *Ijtihâd.*

*** Sixth Point: The Future Vision**

- Changing from Studying the Past to Perceiving the Future.
- Changing form Isolation to Openness, to the Self and Others.
- Changing from Oration and Reception to Interaction and Participation.

Islamic Discourse
Futuristic Vision

Dr. Sa'îd Ismâ'îl 'Alî(*)

Reflection on the different levels of civilizations,cultures and fields of education can help generate diverse ways to settle problems and accept the differences between cultures as being natural and inevitable. It can also give the ability to go beyond the mere objective consideration of other civilizations to positively interact with them intellectually and practically.

- Introduction:

Over the last few decades, the term "discourse" has become more commonly used in Arabic writings than ever before. Discourse, as perceived in this study, can be defined as "the total views, concepts and suggestions proposed by scholars and thinkers concerning the Islamic reality". Basically, it has five elements:

1. Effective rhetoric;
2. Ideological content;
3. Systematic form;
4. Contextual environment; and
5. Doctrine or background of the "source" of discourse.

(*) Professor of pedagogy, Ain Shams University (Egypt).

Although the current study is supposed to discuss Islamic discourse in general, I find it better to illustrate it by focusing on a specific, applied field. The reason for this is to avoid abstract theorization and isolation from reality. Any rational notion requires a realistic "incubator" to be fully developed and organized.

I have chosen education as the field of illustration, perhaps because of my professional specialization, knowledge, background or strong belief, which cannot be elaborated on in view of the limited scope of the current study, that education combines many disciplines. With this in mind, I find education by far the best choice; its basic function is to translate our ideas, opinions and theories into actual behavior. Allah, Glory be to Him, curses the Children of Israel and mentions the reason in the Qur'anic Verse that reads: ﴿***They used not to forbid one another from any wrongdoing which they committed...***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table):79]. He also strongly condemns words without actions. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***Most hateful it is in the sight of Allah that you say that which you do not do.***﴾ [As-Saff (The Ranks):3].

Furthermore, when the Prophet (PBUH) described real faith, he said: «**(Real) faith is that which is implanted deeply in the heart and supported with deed.**» [1] He also said: «**Religion is (good) dealings.**»[2] Here, the Prophet (PBUH) equated religion with behavior.

Why Islamic Discourse?

When the Muslim nation finds itself in trouble and unable to cope with the civilizational and scientific developments happening in the world around us, its scholars and reformers should proceed to scrutinize the crisis seriously and deeply, looking for a successful "route" to bring the nation back into an eminent position among other nations. For the Islamic nation, it should not only have this eminent position, but should also work to fulfill the description given to it by Allah in the Qur'anic Verse: ﴿***You are the best nation ever raised up for mankind...***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 110] Such a description is not inherent, but it is acquired by investing great efforts and perseverance.

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(1) Sheikh Nâsirud-Dîn Al-Albânî, *Mawsû'at Al-Ahâdîth Wa Al-Āthâr Ad-Da'ifah* (Weak *Hadîth* and Tradition Series), (No. 21188).

(2) Ibid, (No.10792).

Actually, the desired route is not something unknown. As we perceive it, the solution is a discourse based on "Islamic methodology", which requires much awareness, sound discernment and directed deployment. The Islamic methodology has not been chosen here on a random, biased or conventional basis. Rather, it has been chosen after a huge deal of contemplation and discussion, as will be explained later.

To be clear about this task (i.e. moving the nation out of its predicament), there should be a general vision of the components and influences of intellectual activity at the present time. The need for a methodology often springs from a problem. Unless the problem is explored and diagnosed, it will be difficult to work out the suitable procedure to solve it. This can be illustrated briefly in the following points: [1]

1. The Western culture today dominates all aspects of human activity in many parts of the world and has a direct effect on the Islamic world, which differs from one region to another. It is widely known that materialism is the core of the Western culture. Westerners, in their intellectual, emotional and spiritual characteristics, have turned into sensual animals whose first drive is pleasure.

2. Under the pressure of materialism, it is natural that human thought loses its freedom and becomes like a slave acting to serve such a wild materialistic animal inside the "modern man". Human relationships are built on interest; religious beliefs are determined by personal desires; and scientific research is utilized to justify all of this. These attitudes have quickly spread widely and are generally considered to be the perfect and most desirable civilization.

3. This instrumental trend may accept to sponsor religious slogans and moral values, regardless of its attitude towards them, just for the purpose of controlling and capitalizing on them. Thus, they are separated from their behavioral and spiritual significance and are used, instead, for pportunistic purposes. This is represented by the Western ideology of "pragmatism", originally developed by the American philosopher and psychologist William James. In part of his doctrine, he questioned whether or not to believe in God. He chose to adopt the former notion (i.e. believe in God) only because he found it more profitable!

(1) Muhammad Sa'îd Ramadân Al-Bûtî, Azmat Al-Ma'rifah Wâ 'Ilâjuhâ (Crisis of Knowledge and Its Remedy); in: Tâhâ Jâbir Al-'Ulwânî et al, Al-Manhajiyyah Al- Islâmiyyah Wâ Al-'Ulûm As-Sulûkiyyah Wâ At-Tarbawiyyah (Islamic Methodology and Behavioristic and Educational Sciences), Herndon, Virginia, International Institute of Islamic Thought: 1990, 1/60.

4. As a result of the materialistic way of thinking, many human studies are influenced by personal motives, national biases and racist prejudices, and they are, then, claimed to be impartial and objective. They attempt to negate their partiality by associating themselves to certain methodologies which emphasize quantitative phenomena.

5. The relations between natural sciences are broken and every part of them is used to serve a specific aspect of the materialistic civilization, which focuses on the needs of the body, while ignoring the spiritual and mental needs of humans. Consequently, such sciences can no longer comply with the principle of "uniformity of knowledge", which is correlated with the united and coordinated nature of the universe, which in turn reflects the Oneness and Divine Might of its Creator. [1]

On the level of the Islamic world, the long centuries of backwardness, ignorance and superstitious mentality have caused the ordinary Muslim to keep to superficiality, blind imitation and literalism. This eventually made him unable to withstand external challenges and influences. When conquered by the modern world, the military, political and economic weakness of the Islamic world caused it to feel fearful and confused.

Under the shock, the Muslim world pursued certain compromises to better its condition, thinking that they were a magic wand that would quickly restore all that it lost[2]. Muslims unconsciously began to adopt Western methods and ideas, being deceived by the apparently successful experience of the West, as well as the Western and Western-advocating advisers, into trying to follow the footsteps of the West. In the occupied parts of the Islamic world, the Western approaches are propagandized, or even imposed by force.

Whether the intention of those who use Western ways to solve their national problems is good or not, they failed to see that, sooner or later, these programs will subvert the bases of the Islamic religion and culture among their peoples. The relation between Western high progress and power, on the one side, and the Western conceptions about God, man and nature, on the other side, is so delicate and complicated that the statesmen who imitate the West are unable to recognize it. Or, their haste for reform led them to attach hardly any importance to that relation.

(1) Ibid., p.62.

(2) The International Institute of Islamic Thought, Islâmiyyat Al-Ma'rifah (Islamization of Knowledge), Cairo, Al-Ahram Press, 1986, p. 28.

Therefore, there has emerged a nonreligious educational system that teaches Western values and notions and has created generations with academic certificates but with no knowledge of their Islamic teachings and heritage. These new generations distrust the contemporary Muslim scholars, who are supposedly the bearers and defenders of the Islamic heritage, because of their literalism, over-traditionalism and tendency to make no distinction between the imperative and specific rulings in the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* and matters that are open to human contemplation and controversy. The gap increased between the secularism-opposing Muslim scholars and the West-advocating secularists. The imperialist powers intervened so that the secularists achieved social prominence and decision-making positions in many Muslim countries(1). Naturally, but yet most dangerously, they had control over education as well as the media.

Regardless of the fact that the reformative efforts to increase Islamic awareness and the approaches to the crisis of Islamic thought are quite various, it is undoubtedly crucial that a group of Muslim thinkers proceed to formulate a "discourse" that presents Islam as a cultural alternative to the Western model, which dominates a large part of our life, as well as an alternative to the mentality of inherent backwardness which demolishes the power and creativity of the nation. It is equally important to be clear about the features of this Islamic cultural alternative and work out a plan of action for all of those seeking Islamic development in every possible field. (2)

Why Future-Oriented?

A variety of names are given to the field of studying the future, such as "Futuristics", "Futurology", "Prognostics", "Futuribles" and, most popularly, "Futurism". We will use the latter term throughout the rest of the treatise. It can be said that futurism is not a separate science, since it interrelates with other natural sciences and humanities. It focuses on the study of a particular subject with its full range of possibilities and options, to anticipate its future developments or the results of decisions made on it. It is, then, determined whether or not the desired goals can be achieved and how to make them possible on the medium and long term by changing the present course of action. By trying to anticipate and plan ahead, futurism

(1) Ibid., p. 29.

(2) Muhammad `Imârah, Ma`âlim Al-Manhaj Al-Islâmî (Features of Islamic Methodology), Cairo, Dar El-Sherouq, 1991, p.15.

seeks to develop a map or compass for the probable developments and changes in the future. This can help policymakers determine the "degrees of freedom" or the possible levels of maneuver, so that the future of the society is not left uncontrolled. The future conditions depend for the most part on the decisions which are taken at present. Thus, attempts to investigate the accumulative, longterm results of decisions serve the purpose of optimizing them to choose the best options for the future. In a nutshell, the present-future relation is interactive, purposive and, of course, constructive.[1]

Is Islamic Discourse Futuristic?

The most regular criticism made against Islamic discourse, or the Islamic approach itself, is probably that it is a reactionary, "past-oriented" discourse. This impression is derived from such common calls of Islamic discourse which state that the solution for Muslims' underdevelopment and crises is for the nation to follow in the footsteps of the earliest generations.

In this way, Islamic futurism is seen, by its opponents, to be like "squaring the circle"; just as a square is completely different from a circle, the Islamic way of thinking is thought to involve looking backwards while futurism involves looking ahead.

The paradox here is that "constants" are confused with "variables". The Qur'ân and *Sunnah* go beyond the limits of time and space. Escriptions of past, present and future do not apply to Islamic teachings, except for the undetermined rulings which are open to *Ijtihâd* (i.e. legal reasoning and discretion). Being liable to human intervention, such rulings are affected by the temporal and spatial factors. The same is true with the Muslims' conduct and practices, which vary depending on time and place.

Nevertheless, some may claim that the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* are interpreted and assimilated by the human intellect, and thus, they are time-based.

This is an utterly wrong deduction. The Qur'ân and *Sunnah* are based on certain fundamentals and branches; the fundamentals are unchangeable, whereas only the branches are the object of *Ijtihâd*. Also, there is a renowned *Fiqhî* principle that no *Ijtihâd* is to be done on a particular matter when there is an express Heavenly text or decree relating to it.

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(1) Mahmûd 'Abdul-Fadîl, *Al-Juhûd Al-'Arabiyyah fi Majâl Istishrâf Al-Mustaqbal* (Arabian Efforts in the Field of Future Readings); in: Khayrud-Dîn Hasîb (ed.), *Mustaqbal Al-Ummah Al-'Arabiyyah: At-Tahaddiyât wâ Al-Khiyârât* (The Future of the Arab Nation: Challenges and Options), Beirut, Center for Arab Unity Studies, 1988, p. 52.

For example, though it happened a countless number of years ago, we all condemn the conduct of Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, when he slew his brother, Abel, on the basis that it is associated to a vital human value that never changes (i.e. the prohibition of killing). Likewise, such essential educational values as truthfulness, sincerity, hard work, etc. cannot be imagined to change over time; wrongdoings can never become approvable and good deeds disapproved! Given that "moral" values include certain fundamentals that are not subject to the dimensions of time and place, would it be astonishing to say that there are religious fundamentals which go beyond the limits of time and place?

So, when Islamic discourse uses and disseminates Qur'anic Verses and Prophetic *Hadîths*, it is not looking back. Rather, it seeks to correct the present and correctly formulate the future.

Here is an illustrative example: When some demanded to revive the *Kuttâb*[1], powerful reactions arose, considering it a step backwards. This is actually a confusion of constants with variables. A study of the Noble Qur'ân is very useful for one's life, at any time, since it is the perfect code for the Islamic society. Thus, it should be one of the top priorities for our educational systems.

However, the system, teaching methodology, educational aids, class size, teacher standards and other details, all are variables that should not be kept as they were in the past, since everything in life has greatly changed. The call for a return to the *Kuttâbs* is actually a call for a return to the "awareness of the Qur'ân", not for a return to the same methodology, aids, etc. of the earlier generations.

Then, can such a call be described as backward or past-oriented? Furthermore, it can be said that the religious way of thinking should be in line with the mission of religion itself, which necessarily focuses on the present and future. Islam pays attention to how we live and how we will live, not how we lived in the past. An individual might commit many evils, but once he stops and shows repentance, he will no longer be classified as a wrongdoer. All that counts is that he continues to be upright throughout the rest of his life.

In addition, every conduct of every man, in every country and at all times, is nothing but a step in preparation for the afterworld. The world in

(1) An old fashioned form of public school in which children were taught the basics of reading and writing, mathematics, etc. by Sheikhs and memorized the Qur'ân, Hadîths and poetry.

which we live is just a bridge to a higher, eternal life. When Allah created man, He did not intend him to stay on earth for a definite number of years just to die and leave nothing behind. On the contrary, man was created to have another eternal life after death, which is a temporary interval between two forms of existence; the first is dedicated to action and the other to retribution(1).

For those who do good in their lives and prepare for the reckoning on the Day of Judgment, they will say as Allah, Exalted be He, mentions in the Qur'an: ﴿***Are we then not to die (any more) except our first death, and we shall not be punished (after we have entered paradise)? Truly, this is the supreme success.***﴾ [As-Sâffât (The Rangers): 58-60]

As for those who take this world as the only life they have, denying any life after death, their state is mentioned in the Qur'an as: ﴿***And for those who disbelieve in their Lord (i.e. Allah),(there is) the torment of Hell, and worst indeed is that destination. When they are thrown therein, they will hear from it a (dreadful) inhalation as it blazes forth. It almost bursts up with fury. Every time a group is thrown therein, its keepers will ask, "Did no warner come to you?***﴾ [Al-Mulk (The Kingdom): 6-8]

In fact, this is a confirmation of Allah's Justice and Wisdom. There are many Qur'anic Verses indicating that the Day of Judgment will inevitably occur, based on the fact that the Creator is All-Wise and All-Just, and He can never be unreasonable or unfair. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Did you think that We had created you in play (i.e. without any purpose) and that you would not be brought back to Us? So Exalted be Allah, the True Sovereign; there is no deity except Him, Lord of the Supreme Throne.***﴾ [Al-Mu'minûn (The Believers): 115-116]

The Qur'ân includes many Verses exhorting people to seek Paradise (where one will enjoy that which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard, and no human mind has ever imagined) and warnings to avoid Hellfire (where there are unimaginable forms of torment) (2). In this sense, human thoughts and actions are directed towards a "future" that is different from other worldly notions of the "future". The future in the Islamic

(1) Sa'îd Ismâ'il 'Alî, Al-Qur'ân Al-Karîm: Ru'iyah Tarbawiyyah (the Noble Qur'ân: A Pedagogic Perspective), Cairo, Dâr Al-Fikr Al-'Arabî, 2000, p. 62.

(2) Mahmûd Shaltût, *Al-Islâm 'Aqîdah Wa Sharî'ah* (Islam: Creed and Law), Cairo, Dar El Sherouq, 1975, p. 45.

perception is focused on the concept of eternity. Allah, Glorified be He, says about the bounties and graces of Paradise:

﴾***But for him who fears the standing before his Lord, there will be two Gardens (in Paradise). Then which of the Favors of your Lord will you (i.e. mankind and the jinn) deny? With (spreading) branches. Then which of the Favors of your Lord will you (i.e. mankind and the jinn) deny? In them (both) are two springs flowing. Then which of the Favors of your Lord will you (i.e. mankind and the jinn) deny? In them (both) are every kind of fruit in pair. Then which of the Favors of your Lord will you (i.e. mankind and the jinn) deny? (They will be) reclining on beds whose linings are of silk brocade and the fruits of the two Gardens are low (i.e. near their hands). Then which of the Favors of your Lord will you (i.e. mankind and the jinn) deny?***﴿ [Ar-Rahmân (The All-Merciful): 46-55]

Concerning the torment of Hellfire, Allah says: ﴾ ***(They will be) in fierce hot wind and boiling water and a shade of black smoke. (A shade that is) neither cool nor (even) pleasant.***﴿ [Al-Wâqi'ah (The Event): 42-44]

He also says: ﴾***No! He will surely be thrown into the crushing Fire. And what will make you know what the crushing Fire is? (It is) the fire of Allah, (eternally) fueled, which mounts over (and pierces) the hearts.***﴿ [Al-Humazah (The Slanderer): 4-7]

What is more, when looking at the educational discourse in particular, we will find it future-oriented by nature. Children are taught to be the adults of a prospective time when things will be quite different from now.

For example, today's first-grader will be a graduate more than 13 years later. Although such a period did not witness much change in the past, it can, at present, constitute a "gap between generations". This is evident within our families, not only among grandfathers and grandchildren, but also among brothers whose ages are largely close.

Thus, the educational discourse should employ a variety of strategies to cope with the dramatic changes in the quality and quantity of human knowledge and skills. Vocational training has become a "common denominator" in all professions. It is really sorrowful to hear some Arab officials saying, for instance, that they "are surprised that the public consumption of electricity has increased" or that "the department has found an unusual increase in traffic", or other such statements.

In fact, it is these officials who are to be blamed for these problems. All the state's officials, experts and advisers, whether institutions or individuals, should have the skills to predict the future, so that they will not be "surprised" by new events, except for such unpredictable emergencies as earthquakes and volcanoes.

In the highly civilized countries, there are monitoring centers and institutions for strategic planning, which anticipate future developments and formulate scenarios for decision-takers. This is particularly important in time of war. The party with the best predictions and preparations will seize the initiative, taking whatever arrangements that serve its goals. However, the party overtaken by surprise will lose control over the situation and have a too limited number of options to take any action.

Futuristic Importance of Examination of the Past

Many people look at history as past events and incidents which are completely isolated from the present and the future. This is a very wrong notion which results from a lack of awareness of the real function of history.

Unfortunately, although it was realized by our predecessors many centuries ago, it is widely ignored in the 21st century, although it is characterized by the spread of knowledge and advanced technologies.

In his book, *Al-Muqaddimah* (Introduction to History), Ibn Khaldûn used the expression "drawing lessons" to indicate that the study of history is aimed in the first place at investigating what happened to understand what is happening or will happen. It also seeks to identify the implications and lessons that can be derived from the course of action, so that we can avoid the mistakes and enhance the positive points.

Ibn Khaldûn wrote, "... The art of history is one of the arts inherited by nations and generations... It involves careful consideration, examination and explanation of matters and their rules, as well as a deep awareness of how and why incidents happen. Thus, it is a basic and worthy branch of wisdom..."[(1)].

He explained how the recording of history requires the researcher to have critical, analytic and interpretive skills, not just the ability to list facts chronologically. Ibn Khaldûn maintained that the historian's function is to "deal with matters from a critical, not taking-for-granted, perspective. When

(1) Ibn Khaldûn, 'Abdur-Rahmân Ibn Muhammad, Al-Muqaddimah (Introduction to History), verified by Darwîsh Al-Juwaydî, Beirut, Al-Maktabah Al-'Asriyyah, 2003, p. 13.

historiography is based on just reporting events while the conventional, political and social conditions are not examined and the difference between the past and the present is not taken into consideration, it will most probably reach misleading and untruthful findings."

In this sense, the Qur'ân includes many stories of historical events and occasions. Many efforts were made to discover the dimensions of the narratives included in the Qur'ân, but they could go nowhere. The goal of the Qur'anic narratives is not merely a chronological record; what counts is the implications and indications of these narratives. Being aware of such implications, the Muslim will be more prudent when dealing with the present and planning for the future. That is why the Qur'ân does not pay attention to specific dates and places.

The Qur'anic narrative of past events focuses, in most cases, on the purpose of "giving lessons". Examples include:

- ﴿***There has already been for you a sign (i.e. example) in the two armies which met (in the Battle of Badr)... Indeed, in that is a lesson for those of vision (i.e. who can understand).***﴾ [Âl-`Imrân (The Household of `Imrân): 13]

- ﴿ ***Indeed, there was certainly in their stories a lesson for those of minds (i.e. understanding).***﴾ [Yûsuf (Joseph): 111]

- ﴿***Go to Fir`awn (i.e. Pharaoh); he has tyrannized over (his people)... Indeed, in this is a lesson (i.e. warning) for whoever fears (Allah).*** ﴾ [An-Nâzi`ât (The Pluckers): 17-26]

- ﴿ ***It is He (i.e. Allah) Who expelled the disbelievers among the People of the Scripture (i.e. the Jews of the tribe of Banû An- Nadîr)... So, take the warning, O you of vision (i.e. who can Understand.*** ﴾ [Al-Hashr (The Mustering): 2]

There are many other Qur'anic narratives from which we can derive practical lessons to make use of in our life. One lesson is that the ignorant people are influenced by compulsion rather than logical argument.

Therefore, they want the adviser to be an authority figure or a rich person. Allah, Exalted be He, describes the response of the disbelievers to Nûh (i.e. Noah; PBUH) saying: ﴿***They said, "O Nûh (i.e. Noah)! You have disputed with us and much have you prolonged the dispute with us. So bring upon us what you threaten us with, if you are one of the truthful.***﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 32]

Another lesson is that the people of authority in a society dislike change and cling to the same conditions they are used to. They criticize the Prophets for they are followed by poor and inferior people. The Qur'ân mentions what the disbelievers said to their Prophet: ﴿... ***And we do not see you followed except by those who are the lowest of us (and they followed you) at the first suggestion (without thinking). And we do not see in you any merit above us; rather, we think you are liars.***﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 27]

In another Verse, they said: ﴿***And We never sent into a city any Warner except that its affluent persons said, "Indeed we, in that with which you were sent, are disbelievers.***﴾ [Saba' (Sheba): 34]

The third lesson is that the narrow-minded adherence to inherited heritages is the most harmful matter to human thinking. This makes human thought paralyzed like an inanimate machine that uses one and the same approach to judge the past, while time and conditions vary.

In addition, beliefs are affected by the passage of time, and thus they need to be refined and corrected, especially when the time between them and their roots becomes longer and longer[1].

An extra lesson is that reform entails sacrifice and hard work. The Prophets themselves were either denied or killed by the disbelievers. Inviting people to do what is right and giving them a good example are necessary in spite of what it involves of risk and hardship. If safety and success are certain, there would be no reformers at all since the way of *Da'wah* and reform is filled with troubles and trials.

In fact, it is difficult to construct one civilization with inharmonious components. So, no matter how different the influences within a civilization are, the most prominent influence should always be the individual factor which represents the essence of the nation's public spirit[2].

It is known that the issue of cultural identity occupies many nations as a result of their vulnerability to what is known as the "Shock of the West". In response to the feeling that their identity is at risk by foreign attacks, nations use different ways to protect their "social character", depending on their respective ideological vision (religious, tribalistic, nationalistic, etc.).

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(1) 'Abbâs Mahmûd Al-'Aqqâd, Al-Islâm Da'wah 'Ilamiyyah (Islam is a Universal Message), Cairo, Dâr Al-Hilâl, Al-Hilâl Book Series (237), November 1970, p. 217.

(2) 'Abdul-Halîm 'Uwais, Fiqh At-Târîkh Fî Dû' Azmat Al-Muslimîn Al-Hadâriyyah (Fiqh of History in Light of the Muslims' Civilizational Crisis), Cairo, Dâr As-Sahwah, 1994, p. 120.

The Arab-Muslim nations made a mistake when they thought that they were subject to one threat, which is the foreign invasion with its scientific/ technological power and imperialistic schemes, while the strategies they use to encounter that challenge are diverse[1].

The Muslim and Arab researchers have long been absorbed in the problem of searching for the identity in our heritage. Many decades of scrutiny on this subject have led to nothing, since it is associated with certain complications that need to be settled: Why do we search for our identity? Is it that the problem preoccupies us theoretically? Why do we search for it within books which themselves need to be reviewed and undergo scientific study? Moreover, the number of researchers who have a scientific methodology or future oriented vision sufficient to regulate the standards of examination are too few.[2]

Thus, the first step necessary for the development of man (who is the basic constructive unit of our nation) is to be aware of our heritage in general, and particularly our educational legacy. These should be based on a set of underlying principles. These principles and guidelines should be substantiated and disseminated so that our perception of heritage is not characterized by the negative and highly criticized image that our culture is past-oriented. Among these principles are the following:

- Heritage should not be considered as an end (in fact, it is a means and it is liable to criticism, examination and change). Also, the inherited basics of Islam (i.e. the Glorious Qur'ân and the Prophetic *Sunnah*) should not be confused with the changeable man-made traditions which are determined by human creativity[3].

- Heritage is not isolated from time and place. It is not an absolute fact that has nothing to do with the passage of time. Thus, inevitably, the distinctive specialties of different nations and societies have to be recognized.

- The individual citizen should be taken into consideration (his psyche, needs, drives, concerns, etc.), since the aim is not just to defend and reinforce heritage in isolation from the human being.

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(1) Shawqî Jalâl, At-Turâth Wâ At-Târikh (Legacy and History), Cairo, Dâr Sînâ for Publishing, 1995, p. 5.

(2) Ibid., p. 9.

(3) 'Abdul-Bâsit 'Abdul-Mu'tî, At-Tadaiyyun Wâ Al-Ibdâ' Wâ Al-Wa'y Ash-Sha'bî Fî Misr (Religiosity, Creativity and Popular Awareness in Egypt), Cairo, General Egyptian Book Organization, 2001, p. 46.

- It is necessary to abandon fanaticism and promote dialogue with the "other", in order to avoid being restricted to the "self" and contribute to the struggle between humankind and life(1).

When the strengths in our cultural legacy are realized and enhanced, and the inconveniences are discovered and eliminated, the Islamic heritage will then turn out as a diverse and creative civilizational phenomenon that can inspire our progress. Consequently, the issue of heritage will be brought out from its "ambiguity" into the open and well-defined areas of social and intellectual intercourse. The nation's people and thinkers who are concerned with its modernization will realize how to integrate Islamic legacy into their struggle against backwardness, substantiate it into the public conscience, revive the memories of the old glorious days of the Islamic civilization, and arouse its sense of originality and honor(2).

To summarize, we can briefly point out a number of possible futuristic functions of the study of Islamic heritage(3):

- To understand the civilizational problems facing Muslims in their social development.

- To know how they dealt with such problems in different eras and regions.

- To objectively approach different views and cultural systems; look at them as means, not ends in themselves; and appreciate them not on the basis of blind prejudice, but in terms of how effective they really are.

- To realize the fact that any civilizational phenomenon can only be wellunderstood by considering the recent and distant influences which brought it into existence in the first place.

- To maintain that the Islamic community is dynamic, and that the concepts of variety and change are crucial for approaching any social entity, just as they are basic for dealing with any biological being.

- To know that as long as change is the law of life, social systems should be always adapted to the changing social needs in an ever-changing world.

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(1) Ibid., p. 49.

(2) Muhammad 'Imârah, Nazrah Jadîdah Ilâ At-Turâth (A New View to Legacy), Cairo, Dâr Qutaiybah, 1988, p. 8. .

(3) Sa'îd Ismâ'îl 'Alî, Muqaddimah Fî At-Ta'rîkh Lî At-Tarbiyah (Introduction to Historiography for Education), Cairo, 'Ilam Al-Kutub, 1999, p. 155.

- To be positively aware of all the opinions focused on social reform and beware of the many reformative suggestions that lack reasonability.

- To know that different types and levels of culture and education create different approaches to the civilizational problems; to acknowledge cultural differences as being inevitable and normal, not undesirable; and go beyond the mere objective consideration of other cultures to responsively interact with their mental and behavioral schemata.

- To develop a sense of social responsibility, reasonably contribute to the cultural and social mechanisms, and help make necessary changes to keep up with the altering needs of the nation.

- To believe that, when communicated to new generations properly, the cultural heritage must create particular attitudes towards all kinds of social situations. It will provide good opportunities to train researchers on where and how to collect information, evaluate clues, eliminate subjectivity, conclude and organize findings, and finally formulate a well-founded judgment on any given historical situation.

Basic Constituents:

In order for Islamic discourse to properly approach the past (i.e. not to be past-oriented, but to use the past as a means of exploring the future), a number of constituents should exist both in the discourse itself and in its source. These include:

Research Tools: The study of the future is no longer a random technique or a guessing process! It is a scientific and systematic process which uses very objective, controlled and accurate tools. There are many centers and studies which are concerned with the examination of the future and use specific techniques, such as the "Delphi Method". Being the most commonly used method, it makes use of the expertise and ideas of more than one expert, and, most importantly, it is known for its cost-effectiveness. Here is how it works: A researcher poses general question(s) before a group of experts and collects their responses. Then, he introduces more specific questions and receives suggestions. This process is repeated as many times as needed until the researcher reaches an overall agreement about their opinions. In this method, several "scenarios" can be made up according to the prospective range of possibilities and alternatives.

An early action in this field was the project organized by the Arab Thought Forum in Amman (Jordan), in the late 1980s, titled "the Future of

Education in the Arab World". The overall project was not actually based on the Delphi method; instead, a number of first-class researchers and scientists were chosen to write extensive papers on education in various regions of the Arab world. Moreover, two symposiums were held, one in Bahrain (1987), and the other in Amman, Jordan (1990). They were attended by a large number of scholars, thinkers and experts who discussed several aspects of the issue. The meetings ended with a final comprehensive report, written, for the most part, by the author of the present essay.

Nevertheless, just using the Delphi technique and scenarios does not mean that it is a reliable scientific investigation of the future. As is the case with different areas and instruments, the concepts of quality, mastery and proficiency are crucial. In many cases, the future-reading scenarios are observably "crude"; they are limited to three probabilities; that the status quo will go worse, better or continue the same. Many futuristic studies are carried out by incompetent researchers who only use guessing or, at best, personal judgments.

Language: We do not mean Arabic, English, etc., though choosing Arabic (as it is the language of the Glorious Qur'ân) should have its own impacts on the content and style of the public discourse. (Language is not a mere set of letters, words and sentences; it is originally a cultural system and mental structure). Language here is used to mean linguistic usage; i.e. the accurate use of words and sentences that expressly represent the intended message and are not confused with other apparently similar words. Given that the recipient unpredictably "decodes" the deep structure of a message, it is necessary for the sender to make sure that the coded message is as clear and accurate as possible. If the language is not clear, any error in understanding will certainly result from the recipient himself, not from defects in the actual message.

As a result of this need for accuracy and clarity, there has emerged a modern discipline called "analytic philosophy". According to it, the function of philosophy is not to explain the world (as maintained by ancient philosophies), or to change it (as maintained by Marxism). Philosophy serves the purpose of logically clarifying the words and expressions used by scholars. Analysis is done not in terms of grammar, but in relation to their logical structure and their representation of what they refer to. Every linguistic unit is coined to represent something in particular; if a word does not represent its designated entity, it will be excluded from the "intelligible" language.

Several Muslim linguists and scholars have paid considerable attention to this issue. The analytic philosophy is particularly important in these days, when the fates of the Islamic and Arab nations are manipulated using "devious" concepts. It is necessary to make more efforts to uncover the falsity of such fallacious (or deceiving) concepts. For example, fundamentalism conjures up regressive and austere impressions (though it originally indicates the adherence to the fundamentals of Islam); *Jihâd* (i.e. fighting in Allah's Cause) is considered a kind of racism and intolerance practiced by bloodthirsty and cruel warriors; resistance is considered terrorism; struggle for the liberation of occupied Arab regions is deemed as illegitimate acts of violence, and consequently many international interventions are made to stop it.

Not less dangerously, the same "political" fallacies are found in the intellectual and literary arenas. For instance, conceptually, creativity is no doubt a human ability, a Divine gift and necessity for renewal and change. Practically, however, this concept is used deceitfully. Some writers claim fallacies about Allah, express their contempt for Islam or write about shameful sexual matters. Then, when some people who are committed to uphold morals and Islam show opposition to such writings, others consider this reaction a transgression against freedom of thought and creativity, while they never dare expressly criticize any mistakes made by the statesmen or political authorities.

If a symbol as trivial as the national flag is not allowed to be violated or dishonored, can this not apply to the Creator of mankind, human creativity and the whole universe?

Atmosphere: Biologically, there should be harmony between the evolution of living beings and the surrounding environment. This Divine Law also applies to human thoughts and their expressions. The best example of the violation of this constituent is the atmosphere of political suppression and tyranny prevailing in many societies, where freedom of expression is too limited. All the political and intellectual activities are tightly monitored by the security authorities to prevent any transgression of the so-called "red lines". When the intelligentsia feel threatened by jail, torture and persecution, they are unlikely to speak or criticize openly or logically. Of course, we always stress the values of bravery, heroism, frankness, etc., but the practices and techniques of torture today are too severe to be endured. Modern technology can even fabricate evidence, so that one may find

oneself accused of unimaginably heinous crimes, just for having different beliefs or freely expressing one's opinions!

To have a well-founded and genuine assessment of the future, it is important to create an atmosphere of intellectual pluralism, where various opinions are freely expressed without persecution, as long as the ethics of dialogue are observed. In fact, this is a crucial issue; any public discourse is basically an intellectual activity, which thrives only with freedom and democracy.

Public Awareness: Just as the manufacturers of commercial products, the producers of public discourse need consumers to use their product, otherwise it will become stagnant. They write and speak publicly to correct something negative or augment something positive. When the general public lack awareness, they are likely to be influenced by malicious or deceptive discourse. Then, such "defective products" will be propagated, while other high-quality products will be neglected.

At the same time, public awareness serves to support discourse producers. In fact, the relation between public awareness and the protection of the creators of discourse is interactive: Effective and truthful discourse can help increase public awareness; similarly, public awareness will make promoters of good discourse popular and protect them.

In recent years, some privileged persons have been publicly introduced as "Islamic" thinkers. They not only misguide public awareness, but also exploit the available media capabilities to dispraise truthful types of discourse and invent facts about them.

Our nation has several prominent figures who produce trustworthy discourse, both in the press and the audiovisual media. These social figures are hated by the official authorities, but their contributions to public awareness and enlightenment make it difficult for the state to get rid of them.

Necessary Skills: It is important for the community of public discourse to have the same skills that are needed by scientific researchers. Lack of these skills will lead to a sluggish, ineffective discourse. They include:

Mental analysis: When an issue is considered, it should be "broken up" into pieces to have a deeper understanding of its hidden nature. However, analysis should go hand in hand with "mental synthesis". This process gives a good idea about the overall picture of the phenomenon at hand. It is based on the widely known fact that a whole entity is larger than the sum of its separate parts.

Relation detection: We have two types of relations. First, there are relations between the internal components of a phenomenon. A watch, for example, is not just a composition of small pieces; there should be a specific relation between these pieces which, together, constitute a watch. Thus, an entity is the combination of smaller entities and there is a relation between them. Second, there are relations between different phenomena. For instance, any economic issue cannot be comprehensively understood unless it is related to the political atmosphere in which it exists.

Logic: It involves putting elements in a well-grounded system, where one element leads to the second, which, in turn, leads to the third, etc. Judgments and generalizations should be based on reasoning and logical argument, depending on the nature of the subject matter. Interchangeability of elements generally indicates a lack of logic, but there are some exceptions. For example, when examining an educational system, you can look at the curricula, teachers, school facilities, textbooks, etc. in any order without needing to put equal emphasis on each factor.

Awareness of societal context: The thoughts underlying a public discourse are not something arbitrary; they are human products influenced by the contemporary, social conditions. That is why a given idea may be suitable for one society, or one era, but not for others.

Meta-awareness: When investigating reality, it should be taken into consideration that many issues might be just the tip of the iceberg. However, this does not entail guessing; there are certain standardized rules that can help explore the invisible aspects of situations.

Deductive skills: It is necessary to depend on the available information to make inferences about the possible course of action. Deduction itself includes other secondary skills, as discussed in detail in books on logic.

Guidelines for Reading the Future:

To successfully apply the process of reading the future to Islamic discourse, a set of guidelines should be implemented, along with the aforementioned points. These include:

1. Reference Determination: For a given discourse to be Islamic, it should be based on all the fundamental teachings that every Muslim should

adopt[(1)] . The reference which is always taken by all the Muslims is the Glorious Qur'ân and the *Sunnah* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿... ***And if you disagree over anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger (i.e. Muhammad; PBUH)...*** ﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 59]

Experts maintain that the culture of the Islamic nation needs to be renewed, to avoid restrictive dependence on either tradition or modernity as the referential framework of the society. Genuine advancement is possible via stimulating people to fulfill their potential in the light of the guidance of Allah's Book (i.e. the Glorious Qur'ân) and the laws of the universe[(2)].

Therefore, Islamic discourse should be derived from the Glorious Qur'ân, as the source of ideology, faith and moral values; the underlying principles of social systems; and the authentic Prophet's *Sunnah*.

2. Reality *Fiqh*: Although Islamic discourse here is discussed in terms of its futuristic aspect, Reality *Fiqh* is always the first step. Any hoped for conditions in the future will be the result of the modification, renewal or alteration of current conditions. This requires[(3)]:

a) Studying and referring to the *Shar'î* texts (i.e. the Glorious Qur'ân and the Prophetic *Sunnah*);

b) Being aware of the contemporary world, which entails having a reasonably good idea of the relevant fields;

c) Making a connection between the Qur'anic teachings and the laws of the universe;

d) Reading the existing reality in connection with the *Fiqh* of Priorities and Aims[(4)], and avoiding a shallow consideration of topics;

e) Employing scientific techniques and methods that use precise, objective and unemotional terminology; and

f) Having a holistic, not fragmentary, view of reality.

3. Infrastructure: The famous saying goes, "A sound mind in a sound body". Originally referring to physical and psychological implications on the individual level, this dictum can be applied more generally to the Islamic

(1) 'Abbâs Mahjûb, Dialogue-Oriented Culture, in the Conference on Islam and Muslims in the 2lst Century, Faculty of Sharî'ah and Islamic Studies, Yarmouk University, Jordan, 27-29 November 2004, p. 437.

(2) Tâhâ Jâbir Al-'Ulwânî, How to Deal with Future Variables Using Past Fundamentals, Kitâb Al-Ma'rifah, Riyadh, 1992, pp. 40-41.

(3) Sâmî As-Salâhât, Methodological Bases to Read Our Current Reality, paper presented to the Conference on Islam and Muslims in the 21st Century, p. 225.

(4) Shar'î disciplines involving the study of priorities and aims of topics from a Fiqhî perspective.

nation, implying historical and social considerations. The mind is the source of thought, which determines the content of public discourse, and the "social body" is the overall system comprising the social structure. The sounder the social structure is, the healthier the thought and, consequently, the more effective public discourse will be.

At the same time, this notion involves some exceptions. Sometimes, the social body may be unsound and yet Allah provides it with a group of thinkers and scholars which have true faith and great determination. They keep away from negative influences, expose the weaknesses of the nation and show how to eliminate them. Thus, the discourse of such scholars will preserve all the positive and enlightening features of a healthy society.

Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that these figures are too few at times when the social structure is unsound. Anyway, if sincere, strong-willed and coordinated efforts are exerted to invigorate the nation and place it on the path of progress, more and more activists will appear that will become involved in sound discourse.

The civilizational strength is like a gas inside a closed space; i.e. it spreads to become an omnipresent trend, not just an isolated phenomenon. This trend will enable Muslims to fulfill the description which Allah, Exalted be He, gives them in the following Verse: ﴿***You (true believers) are the best nation ever produced (as an example) for mankind...*** ﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 110] In fact, this description is not a "carte blanche" or an absolute right of the Islamic nation, regardless of how sound it is. It is dependent on the clear prerequisite mentioned straight after this description: ﴿***... You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong...*** ﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 110]

Here, "what is right" involves everything that can make the society better with regard to health care, economy, sociology, politics, culture, science, etc.; while "what is wrong" implies the opposite. A great saying of the Prophet (PBUH) is the *Hadîth*: «***A strong believer is better and dearer to Allah than a weak believer.*** »[1] The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) also said: «***The upper hand is better than the lower hand.***»[2]

These *Hadîths* do not entail class discrimination between people. In fact, they stress the value of doing one's best and being helpful to others.

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî.

(2) Related by Muslim.

Awareness of such great words is increasingly needed, especially at the present time, when the rule governing the world is power, not justice. Ideally, justice should prevail over power, and power should protect justice.

4. Culture of Dialogue: Dialogue is a natural inclination that Allah created in human beings. Allah, the Almighty, says: ﴿*... But man has ever been more quarrelsome than anything.*﴾ [Al-Kahf (The Cave): 54]

We all tend to inform others of our opinions and want them to agree with us. Dialogue is an everyday conduct aimed at communicating with others, expressing ideas, solving problems, facilitating socialization and enriching cultural life[1].

However, this does not mean that everyone is competent at performing dialogue in compliance with rules and standards of discourse. Many have no tolerance towards contrary points of view, and the dialogue may end up with quarrels or even enmity. A lot of people take dissent as an offence, making no separation between personal dignity and objective debates. In this environment, the truth is completely lost. This is particularly evident in the case of some public officials, who consider any criticism of something under their responsibility as personal censure against them and then act upon such wrong assumptions.

Therefore, if Islamic discourse is to engage in dialogue with others, it should have the "culture of dialogue". It is of utmost importance for any positive and effective cultural interaction.

The culture of dialogue (which the intelligentsia and cultural leaders in the contemporary world try to organize, promote and incorporate into the global educational systems) is a vital civilizational endeavor. It is aimed at making people open-minded enough to contain the disputes with each other within the society, as well as training them to tolerate opinions which are different from their own and making them willing to cooperate with others for the welfare of everyone. More broadly, it targets the concurrence of nations and dissemination of just peace among all individuals and nations. Today, awareness and assimilation of the principles and right procedures of dialogue have become an exigent necessity, a strategic choice and a human commitment. In the field of education in particular, it is a critical

(1) Muhammad Zarmân, Culture of Dialogue and Its Role in Substantiating Communication Between the Self and the Other. The Conference on Islam and Muslims in the 21st Century, p. 460.

determinant of effective learning, the recall of information and development of a confident personality.

A clear-sighted Muslim will realize that just as the Glorious Qur'ân and the Prophet's *Sunnah* uphold dialogue as the best way to achieve discussion-based persuasion, they also uphold the culture of dialogue. Dialogue has its own underlying fundamentals, without which it will lose its sense of direction.

A key principle of the culture of dialogue in the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* is that "variety" is a Divine law of the universe or a fact of life. People differ in color, language, personality, perception, knowledge, etc. They have different opinions, attitudes and approaches. This is a great miracle created by Allah, Exalted be He, and is described in the following Qur'anic Verses: ﴿***And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community (following one religion; i.e. Islam); but they will not cease to differ, except for him whom your Lord has bestowed Mercy (i.e. guided him to embrace Islam)...***﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 118 and 119]

One of the implications included here is that if Allah had willed, He could have made mankind embrace one religion by nature, without any free choice on their part. In this case, they would not have any responsibility, like animals, or be unable to disobey Allah in any way, like the angels. However, Allah has made people diverse and granted them free will and the ability to choose. As the Qur'anic Verse reads: ﴿***... So whoever wills let him believe; and whoever wills let him disbelieve...***﴾ [Al-Kahf (The Cave): 29]

Consequently, the only way of coexistence among people is to keep to a correct dialogue, following its noble procedures and styles(1).

Adopting dialogue as the best solution of all problems requires the discourse/dialogue administrator to abandon notions of unreliability, denial and inferiority of others; not to claim that he has the absolute wisdom; to commit himself to being objective when expressing his thoughts and evaluating those of others; and to pursue the truth through open-minded discussion. He should put his own beliefs on an equal basis with the beliefs of others. In this way, he will not be challenging them, but rather exploring them by comparing them with other opinions. If they have any errors, dialogue will help filter them out, so providing a rich, cognitive alternative(2).

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(1) Ibid., p. 467.
(2) Ibid., p. 471.

Among the prerequisites of dialogue is to focus only on the issue at hand, not on the other party involved in the dialogue. In fact, it is a widely common flaw in most dialogues held in the Arab world that persons involved in them leave the discussion of the relevant subject and start criticizing personal points in the other party. This creates tension and makes the discussion heated, so widening the gap between the different parties and making the whole situation more complicated.

Dialogue also requires that the employed concepts and terminology are well-defined. There are many words that have different meanings for different people. For instance, one person may use the word "democracy" to indicate a Western political system where the people are the source of legislation, which is in conflict with the principle that the Islamic *Sharî'ah* is the source of legislation. Yet, another person may use it as a way of life in which one enjoys his rights to employment, education, residence, expression, etc., without discrimination on the basis of race, religion or class. Thus, if the intended meaning of democracy is not agreed upon, the former is likely to deem democracy as contradicting Islam, a view which may astonish the latter and make him misjudge Islam[1].

The dialogue that Islamic discourse is required to foster should not be only between us and the other. Equally importantly, it should be developed between the government and the citizens within the same society.

Biologists maintain that the more fertilization is carried out between organisms with distant origins, the healthier the offspring will be. Also, physicians frequently warn against marriage between close relatives. The same applies to thoughts; interaction between different, diverse ideas can lead to a healthy, intellectual "fertilization".

When discourse is dominated by a single ideology, the minds will be "infertile" and the nation will become narrow-minded. A nation with inactive thought will be not only static, but also backward.

The absolute truth is known by Allah only and we all are just human beings who can only detect one aspect of the truth. The more different opinions are involved, the more insights will be available to uncover more of the truth.

(1) Sa'îd Ismâ'îl 'Alî, Islamic Education and Challenges of 21st Century, Conference of the Faculty of Education at Sultan Qaboos University, Oman, 1997.

5. A Moderate Approach: Undoubtedly, Islam is the religion of moderateness, and this fact has been strongly established through many writings and actions. The Qur'anic Verse states plainly: ﴿***And thus We have made you a median (i.e. just) community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger (i.e. Muhammad; (PBUH)) will be a witness over you...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

This approach is important because it disciplines public discourse so that it does not adopt expectations and demands which are far higher than the conditions and capabilities of Muslims, nor too low that reality is viewed as inevitable and unchangeable.

The problem with the former approach is that many think it is only a matter of pen and paper. They indulge in unrealistic discourse, talking the general public into dreamy notions. Then, when the matter ends up with failure on the practical level, people feel frustrated and start to lack self-confidence, wishing for a miracle to come and put things right. The shock will be as deep as the dreams which public discourse propagated.

At present, Arab discourse is adopting a totally opposite approach, due to the limitless instances of occupation, political hostility and international persecution against Arab-Muslim countries. Foreign interventions are flagrant, particularly in our religious and social affairs, and serve only the interests of the imperial powers. When protests arise, we are decisively told that we are incapable of opposition or resistance, and that we have no choice other than submission, or that whatever we do we shall never escape the iron fist of the hegemonic powers of the world.

In this respect, the Divine judgment is evident. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***And do not make your hand chained to your neck (i.e. do not be stingy) nor extend it to its utmost reach (i.e. do not be extravagant) so that you will (not) become blameworthy and insolvent.***﴾ [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey):29]

6. Awareness of Change: Heraclitus, an ancient Greek philosopher, once said, "You could not step twice into the same river; for other waters are ever flowing on to you." This has become a famous quotation usually used to represent the law of change governing most of the elements of the universe.

Naturally, this awareness is not a goal in itself; it encourages continuous observation of developments in the particular field of specialization

and other related matters, along with being mindful of the general concerns and affairs of the nation. Public discourse is not produced just for fun, but rather for audiences with diverse and changing interests, conditions and ambitions that require constant follow-up.

Change can occur even at the levels of aspiration or the criteria of evaluation for certain aspects of daily life. A discourse provider may live in a time when things have become different from what he was previously familiar with. Then, he may become too inflexible to be responsive to the new conditions, keeping his same perceptions without adapting them.

That is why the Prophet (PBUH) emphasized the concept of renovation and the role that reformers play in restoring religion into the focus of the society's life. Abû 'Alqamah reported, on the authority of Abû Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him), that the Prophet (PBUH) said: «***At the end of every (one) hundred years, Allah raises up in this (Muslim) Ummah (Nation) one who will renovate religion for it.***»[1]

Early Muslim scholars grasped the interesting implications of this *Hadîth* and accordingly worked hard to provide their age with innovations and improvements in every possible field. As a result, the Islamic civilization thrived, the Muslim mind touched undiscovered spaces of human potential, and the new blood transformed the nation from scattered communities into a unified Super Power that gained glory and honor all over the globe.

Therefore, renovation has always been a response to questions raised by the complications of the time. It opens the door to creativity and mental activity which aims at answering these problematic questions.

The function of the renovating discourse is to restore Islamic culture to its early purest form. This can be achieved by filtering the Muslims' schemata" from superstitions, malicious thoughts and non-Islamic behavior, as well as by educating them in Islamic values and morals. It is the eformers who have always worked towards this goal, liberating people's minds from wrong perceptions and reviving the perfect legacy of the early righteous Muslims.

7. Aggressiveness: Of course, this is not advocacy of aggression; the intended meaning here is just to take the initiative! Modern scientific and technological revolution has a "penetrative" nature. It permeates into

(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd in his "Sunan", the Chapter on "Al-Malâhim wâ Al-Fitan" (Battles and Dissensions).

everyone's life, and it is almost impossible to imagine your life without modern technology, as was the case in the past.

A good discourse should take into consideration the general mainstream of the time in which it exists. It should not wait for others to create and propagate their discourses, just to become an "echo" of, or at best a reaction to, their claims.

The problem with this laxity is that others will determine our agenda. They are entitled to have and support their own choices as they see best for them, but we are not supposed to limit ourselves to the same boundaries that shape their approaches.

Our current public discourses are focused for the most part on openness, coexistence, peace, non-aggression, cooperation and other similar values. By this, we want to refute the accusations laid against us and change the West's wrong image of Muslims. However, this does not mean that we are willing to ignore other certain issues which are equally important.

Showing utmost interest in such values, our public discourse forgets that others exploit them to gain the upper hand and make us vulnerable to them. In reality, it is we who need to stress that we would be treated with these values by others! We have not used aggression against them, occupied their lands nor killed their people; conversely, they have always done this. Even the September 11 attacks - even if it was carried out by Muslims in the first place - would seem trivial when compared to what these countries committed against us (but this does not mean we approve of or advocate violence).

To make it evident, we can reasonably ask: How is our current discourse approaching such issues as economic development? In the West, they have no interest in diagnosing our economic and development problems and, indeed, they do not have to do so. But it is really surprising that we ourselves pay almost no attention to such critical issues in our society, except minimally within the academic circles of economists.

Another example: We have a lot of trouble with our attempts to achieve scientific and technological advancement. Yet, just because the Western officials and media do not draw attention to this state of confusion, it is hardly brought into focus by our media either!

One further example: In some cases, our public discourse may address a problem like overpopulation, taking Western perceptions as the underlying

grounds of consideration. In the West, there is a state of under-population, while the Arab-Islamic world is experiencing serious overpopulation. This can be seen by the Western world as a major threat, given the fact that huge and recurring financial assistance is given out by the Western organizations to enhance population control in Arab countries. They deceive us into thinking that the increased numbers of people are the main reason for underdevelopment and poverty. The fact is that the problem is not overpopulation itself, but actually bad population distribution, waste of available human resources, leaving large areas without investment, poor quality of education, and other adverse phenomena. Such aspects should prompt us to seek for solutions using other methods. These include the Arab Common Market, economic integration, Arab capital being attracted to be invested in national banks, reduction of restrictions on movement between countries, etc.

To Conclude...

Muslims, I believe, have never been in such a state of weakness as that experienced in the present day. Historically, we were attacked by the Tatars, the Crusaders and many other invaders. Muslims of those times, however, had the willpower and self-confidence to resist. This brings to light many concerns about our future. The problem for us is not the occupied lands, subjugated will, appropriated resources and blinded minds. Tragedy strikes when many people become plagued with a lack of self-confidence and a loss of hope.

The need to restore self-confidence and preserve aspirations can never be done simply by advice. We should move together to strengthen our will to live as Allah, Exalted be He, intended for us; i.e. to be "the best nation ever raised up for humankind". This can only be achieved by unity and power.

Islamic Discourse
Escaping Dilemma of Dualism

Dr. Muhammad Ibn Nasr(*)

I am intrigued by a question about why the Glorious Qur'ân covered in detail the rulings of religion, while it contended with general indications when it approached issues pertaining to nature or human beings. I reckon, and Allah knows best, that Allah inspired the believers to exert their efforts in exploring the mysteries of the universe and of man's own self. Allah also intended man to abandon dispute over trivial matters, which eventually result in nothing but perplexity and an absence of action.

- Introduction:

The attitude of pigeonholing schools of thought entails a measure of risk, as it seeks to detect the main stream trends of thinking in a given discourse without reflecting the apparent intellectual thinking in which the various trends of thought cross. Such an approach is mainly concerned with finding out the hidden structural topographies that constitute the structure of discourse and revealing the direction of the contemporary Islamic thought that has witnessed, as we claim, three essential stages. The course of defending the foundations of religion represents the salient landmark of the first of these stages.

(*) Lecturer at the French Institution for Islamic Sciences and Studies (France).

This stage began with a discourse marked by apology. It did not emerge as a strategic choice, but it was imposed by particular conditions at that time. Then, the Muslim mind with its form was not in a position to achieve anything more than adapting itself to the contemporary dynamics, especially when it refrained from approaching the philosophical foundations of Western modernity. Moreover, positivistic rationalism was at its peak, and its superiority presented itself as the only model that could be followed to achieve the ultimate happiness for people. We cannot deny the great achievements that were accomplished by rationalism, but we should not ignore the tragedies it caused, which had not been witnessed in human history before. We have to differentiate between modernity as the entire philosophical perspective that gives room for rationalism, and rationalism itself as an independent trend and method of thinking. The latter gives the mind a free rein and a distinguished and pivotal rank that lead, in some cases, to the denial of religious facts, considering them as superstition or unseen matters. But, it can be said that not every rational method of thinking is necessarily contradictory to or rejects religion.

Perhaps this apparent confusion between modernity as an ideology and rationalism as a method of thinking caused the emergence of the apologetic trend, which appeared under different titles such as, 'the originality of reason in Islam', and 'the adaptation of Islam to civilization and development in contrast to other religions'. However, the dominance of the Liberal and Marxist trends, especially those who adopted a rigid stance toward religion, in the intellectual fields made thinkers with an Islamic orientation concentrate on the foundations of the religion; such as the ontological evidence of the existence of Allah and the need for Divine Revelation as the means of communication between Allah and creation. The failure of the Liberal and Marxist revolutionary ideologies – at least with regard to the slogans and promises that they adopted at that time – resulted in a shift in the interests of the Muslim mind towards new aspects.

These aspects aimed at presenting Islam as an alternative, comprehensive enterprise that can deal with all aspects of life, and an outright rejection of the Western values that drove the world to two destructive world wars.

It may be helpful just to draw a comparison between the image of 'the other' in the book of Sheikh At-Tahtâwî, may Allah bless his soul, ***"Extracting Gold: exploring the life of the Parisians"*** and in the book of

the Martyr, Sayyid Qutb, ***"The America that I saw"***. Here, we may notice the deep shift in the vision of 'the other', which is even dealt with more deeply in other types of writing, such as the book by Dr. `Abdul-Wahhâb Al-Misîrî, ***"The Material Philosophy and Disintegration of Humanity"***. In his criticism, Dr. Al-Misîrî focused on Western modernity and about the philosophical principles of Western civilization and their inevitable consequences.

However, there are still some people who consider modernity as a collective frame for humanity, asserting the humanity and neutrality of reason. Dr. Fathî At-Trîkî, for instance, who is far from being a victim of blind adherence, always calls for open criticism. However, he fell in the same problematic trap when he sought to firmly consolidate modernity as the comprehensive contour of human thought. This approach is shrouded with good intention, though, because he is very overwhelmed with modernity's practical achievements and its scientific theories. At-Trîkî said: "Here, we do not intend to reassert the effect of Ibn Sîna, Ibn Al-Haytham, Al-Bayrûnî and Ibn Rushd on Latin civilization in general and on the formation of the scientific mind in particular. These treatises in the present time have become postulates that were proved by various historical and scientific studies in the East and the West. We just want to affirm that when we keep up with Western progress represented by the Western scientific achievements and technologies, we actually keep up with our intellectual and scientific heritage. We contributed a basic part to the evolution of the scientific mind.

In turn, we should adopt modernity as an essential factor of our entity and an important marker of our identity, in addition to other foundations of identity and heritage that we exhibit on many occasions. Modernity is the point where the controversial circle of the cultural interaction between nations is completed."[1]

At-Trîkî's combination of two imaginaries in one identity, despite the fact that each of them constitutes an independent intellectual system and a world vision, which is based on a predetermined metaphysical perspective and gives particular answers to the major metaphysical questions, cannot be justified. In this sense, talking about identity becomes, in itself, an impossible

(1) `Abdul-Wahhâb Al-Misîrî and Fathî At-Trîkî, Modernity and Pre-Modernity (Damascus: Al-Fikr Publishing House, 2003) p.213.

matter. We think that such an illusion is caused by a deliberate confusion between the meaning of modernity as a comprehensive philosophical vision and the meaning of innovation which may be a common demand, because it aims to realize the good investment of all political, social and economic faculties in order to continue to develop more under the light of different philosophical visions. This is the rightful sense of variation; on the other hand, if all philosophical visions are gathered into one identity it loses any sense.

We can say that the key term or the axial ideology that has developed to rival the idea of imitating 'the overpowering other' is "totalitarianism" according to the moderate parties, or "*Al-Hâkimiyyah*" (ultimate authority) according to the extremists (those who call for judging according to what Allah has revealed). The latter generated the concept of separatism. However, the simplicity of the discourse, the complexity of reality, and the sweeping power of globalization incited Islamic thought to raise the question of the relation between the Qur'anic text and the methods of its interpretation and the preference of interaction rather than separatism. There is also a stress on the idea that the Islamic authority is the criterion for judgment in the light of the legal insight of religion. This is one of the signs that indicate the capability of Islamic discourse to overstep the dispute between contradicting views and opposing reactions and controversies which result from the imaginary incongruity of some concepts that basically belong to only intellectual space.

This study seeks to show how Islamic thought can overcome the challenges of dualism, which dominated its course in the early stage. Some of these dualisms are, for example, Islam and modernity, the state and society, religious sciences and philosophical sciences, identity and openness, and universalism and globalization.

We aim to find answers to some questions, such as: how can we get out from these closed circles? Can we talk about an initiative for establishing a new method of discourse? We shall discuss these topics considering them as obstacles of flexible thought that blocked its progress.

Dualism of Islam and Modernity:

In 1652 A.D. 'Umar Tâlib wrote to caution the decision makers of the Ottoman Empire of the increasing European power. He said, "In the present time, the Europeans have explored the whole world. They sail to the most important strategic harbors in the world. In the past, merchants of India and

Sind[(1)] used to come to Suez and their goods were distributed to the whole world by Muslims. But now, these goods are transported by Portuguese, Dutch and English ships to the West, wherefrom they are distributed to the whole world. They bring the surplus to Istanbul and other Islamic countries where they are sold for five times more than their real price, so they gain much money. Thus, for this reason, gold and silver have become rare in the Islamic countries. Accordingly, the Ottoman Empire must have control of the coastline and the merchandise that passes there, otherwise, in a short period of time, the Europeans will have complete control of the Muslim world" [(2)].

On 2nd July 1798, that is, less than a century and a half after that call was made, Alexandria fell into the hands of the French after an unequal battle against the French navy. Then Cairo fell on 23rd of the same month. On 5th July 1830, Algeria city fell too. Actually, 'Umar Tâlib had an astute vision; he had anticipated the development of the events of the future.

The absence of a balanced standpoint made the logic of contradictions in thought dominant in our Islamic world. So, we stand before two choices: one of them is presented as being decreed by fate and the other as a destructive alternative; i.e. the choice of either Islam or modernity, the state or the people, the religious sciences or philosophical sciences, and the worldly life or religion. It is an endless series of dualisms which is aimed to make intellectual discourse curbed into square one, causing more victims to fall because of their bias to traditionalism or to modernity, or even to an old fashioned view instead of another one which is even older, or to a modern one instead of another which is even more modern. Consequently, this deepened the restricted view of matters and lessened the value of both cultural heritage and modernity. So, there started a blazing fire of civil war, whose means and heroes change, but whose core is still firm.

Hence, the need to reconsider Islamic discourse emerges as a necessity to identify the dualisms which impede its escape from this dark tunnel and prevent it from achieving progress.

The pioneering reformists' recognition of modernity before thoroughly recognizing its philosophy narrowed down their view to only its

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(1) A historical region of southern Pakistan along the lower Indus River. Inhabited since prehistoric times. it was held by Muslim dynasties from the 11th century until 1843, when it was annexed to British India. Sind became part of Pakistan in 1947.

(2) This text was mentioned by Khâlid Ziyâdah, (Discovering the European Progress). Beirut, At-Talî'ah publishing House, 1981, p. 30-31.

material achievements. As a result, they did not comprehend its theoretical framework or its goals. They considered it just as a rational, enlightening movement which aimed to bring happiness to man as well as providing him with scientific knowledge, which frees him from superstitions and makes him self-dependent. They did not understand the core logic of modernity, but their understanding was influenced by its particular problems. They adopted a functional view in solving problems of backwardness from which the Islamic society suffered. The major projects of the European civilization necessitate that others remain in their structural backwardness, so their resources are plundered and their intellectuals are exploited to establish these major Western projects.

Therefore, they inundated the world markets with their goods and products and imposed their life style on people. Modernity placed man at the top of the pyramid of living creation and made him the master of nature. The well-known French philosopher, René Descartes (1596- 1650) said, "Man should be the master and the owner of nature." (1) Likewise, his counterpart, Francis Bacon (1561-1626) made the ultimate goal of scientific research to be the realization of 'the domination of man over nature'.

Contrary to what is believed, this man-nature relationship is found not only in modern rationality, but also in the Judea-Christian culture, and more specifically with regard to the earth. They considered it the place of man's exile due to his original sin.

The historian, Lynn White said, "It is unlikely that the fatal reaction of the environment can be avoided by providing more knowledge and technology. Our sciences and technologies are developed under the auspices of the Christian ideology of the relationship between man and nature. This ideology is honored not only by Christians and neo-Christians, but also by those who consider themselves truthfully post-Christians." (2) This ideology is implied in the Gospel, when it says, "Cursed is the ground because of you, through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you." [Gen. 3/17-18] It is the destination of exile and expulsion.

The Western man who has a Christian ideology behaves on earth with an unconscious sense of revenge. This ideology has oriented his actions and determined his relationship with other creatures. This explains

(1) René Descartes, Discourse de la Méthode (Paris: Flammarion, Coll GF, 2000).
(2) Lynn White, Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis, Science 155, 1967, 1203-1207.

the consequential fate of rationality. It began as a method of unfolding the mysteries of nature and controlling it as well as directing human actions and dominating them. Then it ended up by totally responding to man's instinctive physical desires. So, the actions of man became meaningless.

Thus, all the foundations of the society collapsed one after another and the whole society became as a movable solid mass with an aimless orientation. Everything has become equally acceptable. Indeed, it is a tragic retrogression which `Adul-Wahhâb Al-Misîrî talked about in his book. He said, "The modern Western civilization, in one of its important aspects, reflects the constant tragic retrogression of the human philosophy that emphasizes man's independence from nature and matter and his ability to overstep the material world and develop metaphysical, cognitive conceptions. So, it put him at the center of the cosmos. This retrogression happened at the same time there was a constant rise in static, materialistic incarnation, or pantheism, or comprehensive secularism, which neglects man and his moral and cognitive conceptions and puts him at the same level as natural phenomena. Consequently, it ignores him as an independent entity with an absolute value separate from the laws of motion."[1].

Nature is no longer capable of systematically fixing the ruin that man has caused, which goes beyond conceivable limits. Man's experimental exploitation of nature was undertaken within the frame of the normal cycle of life, but now he has begun to misuse the principles of the natural order of life itself, such as his experiments in genetic engineering… etc. The Noble Qur'ân establishes the relationship between man and nature in accordance with the principle of subjection as Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***Do you not see that Allah had made subject to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth and amply bestowed upon you His favors, [both] apparent and unapparent?But there is of the people he who disputes about Allah without knowledge or guidance or an enlightening Book. [from Him].***﴾ [Luqmân (The Sage): 20]

Man's relation with nature must be based on the endeavor of unfolding and respecting its laws, not changing them. This supercilious attitude of changing nature will bring about nothing but destruction because it emerged from the idea which is in conflict with everything.

(1) `Abdul-Wahhâb Al-Misîrî, Communism, Monotheism and Comprehensive Secularism. At-Tajdîd Magazine, first year, second issue, July 1997, Rabî` Al-Awwal 1418 A.H .

Failure to recognize the foundations of the Western civilization clothed its material products with a glamorous prestige, especially for those Muslim pioneers of intellectual reform who had close contact with this civilization. Surprisingly, this prestige still deceives many people who think that the whole world can live in peace, freedom and security, though the principle of the survival of the strongest is yet a prevailing condition for its existence. How will the world look like if it becomes an oasis of freedom where every nation possesses knowledge and power, so all countries will be productive and self-dependent within the framework of mutual cooperation? How will it look like if man can freely travel anywhere he wishes, just as his capital can move freely without any restrictions, and people exchange new inventions and scientific research as easily as they exchange news of disasters and wars today? Will not this mark the end of the monopoly of knowledge and power that the West practices? It is naive to think that the West, who built its civilization on the principle of domination and lundering the resources of other people, will submit willingly and honor human rights, though this will deprive it from having leadership of the world and place it at the same rank with other countries.

Actually, the image in which modernity is presented deludingly inspires this idea. This image is a universal project that announces justice and freedom for humanity. This issue reduces the question of the separation of religion from the state in such a way that indicates its neutral view. It defined secularism as, "Believing in the possibility of improving the condition of humanity through material means, without dealing with the issue of faith, whether positively or negatively".

This is the definition adopted by John Holyoake (1817-1906). Nobody would reject a call to reform the conditions of man, but the question is: Why through material means, and which particular model should be followed? Actually, this is deliberately not included in the definition.

Muslim reformists did not give much attention to discussing the concept of 'progress' philosophically. The desire to bring about change to their societies led them to simplify the concepts of progress and try to domesticate it. They also saw in many of its aspects the road to actual fulfillment of the abandoned principles of Islam in the Muslim countries. Imâm Muhammad 'Abduh said, "I found there (i.e. in the West) Islam without Muslims, but here (i.e. in the East) I found Muslims without Islam." Just as being dazzled by the material progress was an obstacle in grasping

a deep perception of modernity, the negative results of its application in the Islamic world before deeply examining it ignited the call to boycott all the achievements of the human mind.

Results of the state of being completely dazzled were not less detrimental than the results of total boycotting. The logic of contradiction between different matters led to an apparent, total disharmony between them. Then it changed to obstacles that impeded the development of a workable example derived from our Islamic values and based on the aspects of success in other experiments. Today, it is vain to think that Muslims are self-subsistent and are able to do without what others have achieved. It is not sensible to think that the problems produced by the material civilization of the West do not concern or affect Muslims. The influence of these problems on the Islamic societies is greater and far more dangerous, as we do not possess the required methods of protection against them. The transnational companies all over the world work according to the principle of profit and loss. Inasmuch as these companies work hard to serve and protect their luxurious societies, they also deal cruelly with other societies.

Hence, the Islamic intellect must develop an effective model of modernity based on the concept of monotheism and focused on prosperity both in the seen and unseen worlds. Thus, it will give meaningfulness to the world and purposefulness to human action. Thereupon, the comparison now should be made between a modernity based on monotheism and a material modernity which is quite detached from any relationship with Allah, not a comparison between Islam and modernity in the absolute sense.

Dualism of the State and Society:

In their attempt to comprehend the potentials of Western progress, the state appeared to Muslim reformists as the maker of progress. Therefore, they presumed that reform of the society was contingent upon the reform of the state. When the state turned into an institution that produces andsponsors violence and oppresses the society, Muslim thinkers called for boycotting all activities related to the state. So, the reformists' unawareness of the particular circumstances that led to the establishment of the State in the West made them choose the reformative message of the nascent 'nation–state'. Likewise, their ignorance of the conditions of establishing the modern state and the factors of its power led to engaging in abortive political adventures.

The first choice was taken and developed within the framework of blind imitation, and its advocates did not understand that the development of the Western society was the direct reason for the formation of the state. Thus, however despotic it might be, the Western state cannot overstep human and social institutions which helped to form it. The role of the state is necessary to control the conflict between different competing social forces which seek to insure domestic peace and stability required for a developing economy.

Establishing the 'nation–state' in the Muslim world was achieved in accordance with a strategic vision, whose scope exhausted the perception of its advocates. Soon enough the state found itself in a fatal clash with the society, which it supposedly came to reform. This state advocated ambitious projects, but it lacked the required potentials. Therefore, it levied burdensome taxes on the people. Also, the first priority of the nation-state was to reform and strengthen the military forces and the police on the ground of defending itself against any possible external attack. Khayrud-Dîn At-Tûnusî said, "The state that does not keep up with the military capabilities of its neighboring states, by equipping its armed forces with the most up-to-date, effective weaponry and military strategies, will become one day an easy target for occupation."[1]

Instead of being a strong armor in protecting Muslim societies, the newly formed police and military force turned to be a shield to protect the institutions of the modern nation–state and a spear pointed at the hearts of its people, who felt that the gap between them and the elite rulers was constantly widening. The nation-states lost the legitimate approval of their people, and they frequently were short on material capacities. Therefore, they resorted to taking heavy loans from the powerful countries, who had long anticipated that the states they sponsored would inevitably take this step, which the powerful countries had strategically well-planned. Accordingly, the very existence and survival of the small nation-states depended fundamentally on the strategy of the major countries, which took the failure of the small, weak nation-states to repay the loans as an excuse to occupy them. Thereby, they managed to dismantle the Muslim nation and impose their model of development on it so that the Muslim states became subservient to them in all fields, politics, economy and culture.

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(1) Ma'n Ziyâdah, Khayrud-Dîn At-Tûnisî, his book: Aqwam Al-Masâlik fî Ma'rifat Ahwâl Al-Mamâlik. (Beirut, Al-Mu'sasah Al-Jâmi'iyyah Lilderasât for Publication and Distribution, 1985) p.152 .

From what is mentioned above, we can say that there is no real difference between a state under direct occupation and the state in the post-colonialism era. This does not mean that we undervalue the achievements that have been made in the latter era. But, here, our purpose is to talk about the causes of the permanent conflict between the state and society, or at least with one of the parties of the society, which directly causes a permanent disruption in the institutions of the state and the society alike.

On the other hand, Islamic history witnessed certain periods that had a distinctive relationship between the ruling elite and the non-governmental institutions. There was a kind of distribution of roles: the state assumed the responsibility of political government, which we may call nowadays the "public space", while the non-governmental institutions took the responsibility of managing the affairs of society. In the past, the tribe, the mosque and the vocational institutions, each had their own role. These social institutions blocked the state from dominating the society. Any attempt to expand the sovereignty of the state was doomed to failure. But when the nation-state emerged, the concept of total domination was consolidated, and the state sought to throw away these mediating institutions. As a result, the citizen felt isolated and was exposed directly to the violence of the state.

With the expansion of the sovereignty of state, there was a reaction from some people who basically rejected the state and called to boycotting it. So, the conflict deepened between them and the tasks of the state, a conflict that paralyzed the dynamics of the society. Since the establishment of the nation-state was not a point of deep research to thinkers of the Islamic revival, they underestimated the need to face it. They later came to realize their weakness in the face of state power. This confrontation brought bad consequences to all. This is because the weakest point of Muslim intellectuals is political thinking. As we stated above, this inadequacy was inherited from the system of distributing the roles between the Sultans and *Faqîhs* (Jurists). In the 'nation-state', the area of security and its apparatus are the strongest elements in which Muslim scholars have the best experience. So, it is not strange to see that the clash with the state is the dominant situation and has proved to be catastrophic to all.

The state intensified its despotism and became an unchallenged power; it had the upper hand over every thing; the civil society, in return, weakened and its effective powers were eliminated.

There was no way out from this dilemma except by an agreement to renounce violence, for both to recognize the other, and to give space

to the voice of reason and dialogue between the two parties. When there is stability (stability is a prerequisite but not enough) resulting from acting for the sake of public interest and fair competition, not from fear that causes despair, then talking about scientific and economic excellence and social security will become viable. It is a multi-faceted combat for development, which requires a well-planned strategy and intensive efforts from all parties.

The Islamic discourse has split into different paths, those who call for bringing change by force and those who advocate the path of wisdom and fair admonition. Each tries to provide legal proofs from the Islamic *Sharî'ah* to support their view, while the question does not need hard argumentation inasmuch as it needs making the right choice of appropriate solutions in the right case. So, the nature of each case determines the nature of the approach, not vice versa. Therefore, the choice of a certain approach of treatment must be aimed at the development of the existing achievements of the reform, not to ruin them. This is what we should learn from the Qur'anic statement: ﴿***And do not be like she who untwisted her spun thread after it was strong [by] taking your oaths as [means of] deceit between you because one community is more plentiful [in number or wealth] than another community. Allah only tries you thereby. And He will make clear to you on the Day of Resurrection that over which you used to differ.***﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees):92]

Thus, the true effective reform is that which is based on cumulative experience with a long-term, strategic perspective, not on the limited interests of the parties concerned. Indeed, the lurking imperial powers will not be satisfied with this solution. They will exert all efforts to constantly fuel the fire between all active powers of the society. They want the Muslim societies to be torn apart by internal conflicts and their consequent wounds and diseases. According to 'Abdur-Rahmân Al-Kawâkibî, "If despotism(1) were a man and wanted to introduce itself, it would say, 'I am evil, my father is injustice, my mother is offense, my brother is treachery, my uncle is humiliation, my son is poverty, my daughter is unemployment, my clan is ignorance and my homeland is devastation." (2) So, can a society battered by all these diseases, be able to develop and utilize its intellectual and scientific faculties, improve its conditions of life, and be capable of competitively

(1) Despotism has more than one source; unfortunately, it is a common culture among all parties. This is the most just way of describing how it is distributed.

(2) 'Alî Al-Muhâfazah, The Intellectual Trends of Arabs, Beirut, Al-Ahliyyah Press of Publication, 1978, p. 171.

presenting itself as the society of the best nation that was produced for mankind? It is necessary for this nation to go beyond this dualism which has exhausted its energies, wasted its wealth, derailed it from the race of civilization and alienated it from its scientific and material legacy.

Dualism of natural Sciences and Religious Sciences:

Since Muslims began to seriously work to reform the conditions of their societies, they considered education as the cornerstone of the reform process. So, they sought firstly to incorporate the natural sciences into the programs of education in the traditional Islamic institutions. But they were confronted by severe opposition by the majority of *Faqīhs* of that era who raised the slogan of 'safeguarding the religion and creed', due to their good intention, misunderstanding or both reasons. They mistakenly thought that there was no relation between public affairs and religion. So, unconsciously, they developed what is called religious universalism. On the other hand, others raised the slogan in order to preserve their distinct social position, though they knew well that their position in the traditional society would soon be marginalized, if not abandoned. For example, the scholars of Al-Zaytoonah University, who objected to the programs of education reform, hastened to educate their children in modern institutions, from which members of the modern elite class graduated. Later, many of this elite class became the fiercest proponents of the school of secularism in its various forms. These institutions constituted the nucleus of the modern universities in the Muslim world, and they gradually began to throw out the religious programs.

The end of the 19th century witnessed the call for incorporating the natural sciences into the curriculums of the traditional schools. However, the end of the 20th century witnessed the call for incorporating the *Shar'ī* (religious) sciences in the curriculums of the secular universities. However, this was also faced by the same strong opposition. Meanwhile, some educational institutions have emerged in the Muslim world that seek to integrate science as a necessity, to equally educate students in both the *Shar'ī* sciences and natural sciences. In Malaysia, the International Islamic University is considered the prominent educational experience in this sphere. The University follows the philosophy of integrating all sciences in order to achieve harmony between *Shar'ī* and natural specializations. A thin thread links these specializations, which is represented by introducing certain complementary modules to the main courses. In addition, each one of these disciplines preserves its main premises according to its objective.

The implied contradiction that dominated our intellectual arena made the *Shar'î* sciences remain conditional on the traditional perceptions and it made the position of humanities conditional on human positivist perceptions. Accordingly, this perceived diversity produced a genre of elite thinkers who belonged to different cognitive currents with different competent authorities and contradicting objectives.

How can we distinguish *Shar'î* sciences from human sciences?!! How can the sciences which are pertinent to the interpretation of the Glorious Qur'ân solely monopolize the domain of the *Sharî'ah*?!! Is not the researcher who studies humanistic sciences or natural sciences walking in the path of worshipping Allah, while s/he seeks Allah's pleasure by seeking the welfare of humanity?!! What is the use of learning the teachings of the Holy Book without understanding nature and how to deal with it, or without understanding the nature of man and human society?!!

What is traditionally known as the study of *Shar'î* sciences is essential for every discipline, but it should not be considered as an independent science. In this sense, all sciences can be considered as *Shar'î* as long as they seek the knowledge of Allah and strengthen man's relationship with Him. So, the value and status of any science is derived from its aim, not from its absolute content.

However, this does not mean that we stop learning *Shar'î* sciences or other classical sciences (*Hadîth* and Qur'ân) because these sciences are as necessary as other sciences; they are even the centripetal force of all sciences, and every Muslim researcher has to learn these sciences so that the aim and objectives of his research will be based on the Islamic creed. I always wondered why positivist curriculums are absent in most Western universities, though positivism as the basis of intellectual thinking, is strongly present in every curriculum. Despite the differences in viewpoints, the general framework of thinking remains one and the same. There is no disagreement regarding understanding central essential issues, such as existence, the Universe or man in all scientific disciplines. Even the theory of criticism, namely, post-modernism does not go beyond the general frame of positivism. Whereas all types of curricula in the Muslim world lack this unified philosophical frame.

I am haunted by a question about why the Noble Qur'ân covers in details the rulings of religion, while it is brief and general when it approaches issues pertaining to nature or human beings. I reckon, and Allah

knows best, that Allah has inspired the believers to exert their efforts to explore the mysteries of the universe and of man's own self. Allah also intended man to abandon disputes over trivial matters, which eventually result in nothing but confusion and a lack of action.

Accordingly, any discipline, whether it is related to Allah's Book, nature or man, should be honored and should deserve man's pursuit. The Prophet (PBUH) said: ***«Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim...»***[1] I do not think that the above-mentioned *Hadîth* refers only to that knowledge pertinent to the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. Theoretically, however, it is not impossible to think that the Prophet (PBUH) meant knowledge in its comprehensive sense. I think the knowledge that has to be sought after is that related to understanding man and nature. As for the knowledge related to the *Shar'î* rulings, it is plainly settled by the teachings of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, so man may be brought up according to them, and does not need to spend his whole life in indisputable matters or exerting efforts in trivial controversies. Today, we witness many students seeking knowledge for what is traditionally called "*Shar'î* sciences". Moreover, many other researchers quitted their fields of specialization to join the illusive battle of rereading the religious texts. This is a truth that is intended to be carried out to seek falsehood. The elite thinkers, instead of working hard and excelling others in their respective professions in the light of the Qur'anic guidance, presumed that renaissance of the Islamic nation is contingent upon escaping this dilemma. This is an indication of the reversed priorities which caused a waste of the intellectual energies and human faculties.

How could Islam, which had his Muslims engaged in contemplation and investigation, be perceived so much as an obstacle to cultural progress that the matter requires holding series of conferences about Islam and development?!! How could Islam, which laid down consultation *(Shûrâ)* and commanded adherence to it, even in some cases that lead to an unsuccessful outcome, such as what happened in the Battle of Uhud, be thought of as an obstacle to true democracy to the extent that Islam and democracy are presented as two incompatible ideologies, which thinkers try hard to reconcile!!

Muslim thinkers became drowned in the swamp of theoretical debates characterized by the attitude of imitating the inherited culture and raising the

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(1) Related by Ibn Mâjah.

same questions and giving the same proposed answers of the alien ideology. So, efforts were doomed to issue nothing and debates became fruitless.

The Muslim intellect could not become an innovator if it remained the prisoner of searching the others' repeated questions and coming up with the same answers. A glance at the current problems that we discuss in the uslim world would show that most of them deal with the specific problems of the other, those problems or issues pertinent to previous generations at the time when we had the upper hand, or to people in the modern world who seek to keep us weak: as our weakness is the source of their power.

Hence, the outcome of imitation is the same, be it of the past or the present. For how long will the Muslim intellect remain subordinate to the intellect of others?!! Is subordinate thinking considered a genuine, innovative way of thinking?!! Actually, it is only a reproduction of others' ideas, but in different forms.

Of course, the mixed educational system is an advancement to achieve the unified goals of knowledge, but this remains marked by limited effectiveness. This does not mean disregarding the specific specializations, but the goal is that these specializations should be pooled together to serve their principles, the purposes and moral values through which the results of sciences can be invested. Moreover, these specializations should also be independent subjects and have independent research methods. The international Institution of Islamic Thought in Washington and other scholarly centers and universities associated with it in the Arab and Muslim world have exerted considerable efforts on firmly found cognitive methods of research and produce them in accordance with a view that makes the concept of unification or integration the centre of development and usefulness of different sciences, whether related to the seen or unseen worlds. This idea is so pivotal in it self and should be considered as the incentive for all serious attempts to reform the methods of thinking and the body of values, which is hardly able to withstand the overwhelming advance of deviant materialism.

Yet, every idea will lose its effectiveness if it does not get a chance to be investigated and considered properly. Any innovative intellectual project, by nature, cannot be placed in a mold and it rejects polarization. Truth, from a human perspective, is usually contested by various parties. Moreover, searching for contradictory dualisms annihilates dialogue, inhibits innovation and blocks all ways to get out of the inherited and enforced backwardness.

The Dualism of Identity and Openness:

It is not an exaggeration to say that humanity has not witnessed any civilization that has the ability to assimilate new rising cultures and develop them in accordance with its own standards, both in its time of dominance and weakness, as much as the Islamic civilization has done. The Islamic civilization is characterized by openness to particularity and diversity. This is because it was founded according to the religion of natural disposition (i.e. Islam) which reinvigorated the Prophets' divine message after orrecting and refining it from distortions. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***Indeed, We have revealed to you, [O Muhammad], as We revealed to Noah and the prophets after him. And we revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, the Descendants, Jesus, Job, Jonah, Aaron, and Solomon, and to David We gave the book [of Psalms]. And [We sent] messengers about whom We have related [their stories] to you before and messengers about whom We have not related to you. And Allah spoke to Moses with [direct] speech. [We sent] messengers as bringers of good tidings and warners so that mankind will have no argument against Allah after the messengers. And ever is Allah Exalted in Might and wise. But Allah bears witness to that which He has revealed to you. He has sent it down with His knowledge, and the angels bear witness [as well]. And sufficient is Allah as Witness.***﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 163-166]

This firm foundation undeniably invested Islam with the faculty to assimilate and integrate the previous and new human experiences. This cannot be denied by any one, as Goldzieher said, "Islam has proved its ability to assimilate other ideologies and digest them. It also managed to boil down all these foreign cultures into its own crucible in such a way that they do not appear at their full reality except through meticulous analysis and thorough investigation."(1).

The capability, assimilation and incorporation of approved values of modernity and reshaping them in accordance with the criteria and basic attitudes of Islam was the cause of the hysterical reaction of non-religious trends against Islam and Muslims. Islam did not accept the policy of compromise and bending in the storm. This is because it views that bending generates nothing but subservient opinions and perceptions. Since the storm is not always temporary, and since Islam views itself as the religion of the natural disposition of man, Islam took an unswerving position and it did not

(1) Ignaz Goldzieher, Belief and Creed in Islam.

yield to all variables of capricious, human perceptions. Even if deviation from natural disposition is shown as the truth, humanity will find out, sooner or later, especially after it has become distressed by excessive materialism, that Islam is the religion of moderation and is the most convenient mode of human nature. And, who knows the nature of creatures more than the Creator?!!

The Islamic identity is safe, even when it is exposed to other cultures.

Those who oppose the openness of Muslims to the 'other' usually cite the negative experiences of other religions, but they forget that these religions inherently bear the potential to come to an end. Indeed, the policy of bending has already led other religions to complete dissolution in face of the materialistic life style. This is because they entirely dissolved into other cultures so that they lost their own characteristics. They also melted in the secular system to the extent that they lost their role of guiding and rationalizing public life. Contrary to this, Islam managed to maintain its essential constituents. With the capability of assimilation, Islam managed to overcome the allegation of the dualism of religion and modernity. New Muslim generations were born knowing no incongruity between religious teachings and achieving excellence in all domains. Therefore, they did not consider the religious values as an obstacle to scientific research.

It was not easily welcomed by the Western mind to witness Islam going beyond this dualism. They became anxious and cautious in dealing with Muslims. So, the influential decision makers sought to search for cadres who abandoned the general logic of Islam and made them influential to gain the upper hand in their societies. Although the new and influential decision makers did not spare any effort in helping the clients of the foreigners to have power, these cadres did not go beyond the surface, and were far away from having any deep roots in the society.

So, their voices faded away rapidly, while their backers thought that they were safely gaining ground. For several decades, Western secularists, whose research area concerns Islamic affairs, and those Muslims who are infatuated with their theories have anticipated the imminent decline and extinction of Islam. For this purpose, they exerted all efforts, and wealthy decision makers – who accumulated their wealth through rapine and illegal methods – sponsored them. But Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***Indeed, those who disbelieve spend their wealth to avert [people] from the way of Allah. So they will spend it; then it will be for them a [source of] regret; then they will be overcome. And those who have disbelieved - unto Hell they will be gathered.***﴾ [Al-Anfāl (The Spoils): 36]

They falsely alleged that Islam opposes science and scientists. When they came to discover the falsity of their allegation, they argued that the strength of the religious values of Islam in resisting the overwhelming trend of liberation was not due to their inherent potential strength, but because of their deep-inculcation in the communal sub consciousness. So, according to their view, it is a matter of time; as soon as the old generation comes to an end, the new generations, who are educated in the modern schools, will sever ties with religion and traditions. However, the disappointment of these secularists was massive. In the modern schools, where they placed their greatest hope, the Islamic revival emerged, with ambitious groups of cultured youth who managed to combine affinity to religion and scientific research; they even considered the study of science as a method of worship in itself.

Western secularists, however, did not give up. They began searching for new pretexts, such as that the impoverished are usually infatuated by superstitious fantasies of religion, which can die out over the course of time. But they have not realized yet the greatness of Islam in adapting to adverse conditions and aborting all strategies that aim at eliminating it. Therefore, calls for being closed in upon ourselves in order to preserve the Islamic identity are not justified. The so-called strategy of separatist immunity proved its failure, besides, it is no longer feasible in the age of the open world.

It is no longer accepted that defending the identity can be done by imposing control over dissenting opinions in religion and in politics. As we ask for the freedom of Muslims to practice their religion, we have equally to protect the freedom of non-Muslims, whether they be newcomers or citizens of the Muslim society. Thus, all kinds of despotism, whether in the name of politics or religion, are legally and logically refused.

All kinds of constructive criticism of religions should be protected, provided that they abide by the codes of ethics: no defamation or mockery should be employed. In this way, Sheikh Abû Al-A`la Al-Mawdûdî made a very important statement: "In the Muslim society, non-Muslims will have freedom of expression, in writing, voicing their opinion, right of independent thinking and meetings, exactly as the Muslims have. In this case, they will also have duties and restrictions similar to those placed on Muslims. So, it will be permissible for them to criticize the regime and its officials, even the head of the government, within the limits defined by the law. They will have the right to criticize aspects of Islam exactly as Muslims have the right to criticize their doctrines. So, Muslims have to abide by the boundaries of the law with regard to their criticism, as it is obligatory upon non-Muslims. Moreover, they may have complete freedom

to praise their doctrine, but if a Muslim apostatized, evil consequences and sins would be upon him alone, without non-Muslims being blamed for this. In the Muslim society, non-Muslims will not be compelled to confess a creed or undertake an act that is forbidden in their religion; they will do what agrees with their conscience as long as it does not violate the law."[1]

This trust and this truthful determination are derived from the belief that Islam will never be defeated in an intellectual battle. No sane Muslim would ever abandon Islam after s/he tasted its sweetness, except due to an insatiable desire for the pleasures of this world, ignorance or isillusionment.

In all cases, responsibility for abandoning the religion lies upon Muslims, not upon the freedom that must be ensured for friend and foe alike. So, Muslims should get the lesson from their contemporary life.

Actually, the genius of the civilized world, which is so cruel to others, is measured by its success in confronting and crippling all the attempts to raise the economic, political, scientific and intellectual standards of other nations. However, despite all this, the Muslim Nation is taking up the challenge and is proving capable of continuously revitalizing its energies. In addition, adherence and conversion to Islam is at its peak in non- Muslim societies. It was deemed that the battle was settled in favor of nonreligious trends when the values of secularism and unrestricted modernity prevailed. Secularists eventually lost their beliefs and gave up the values of unlimited individual freedom which they fervently advocated. They then resorted to suppression, exercised by the state to eliminate man's innate adherence to religion. When secularists became aware that there was no avail in confronting Islam, they turned to fragmentize its core by dividing Islam into different 'forms' of Islam: Islam for the public and Islam for rulers; Islam for the elite and another for scholars, a civilized Islam and an uncivilized one, and Islam for the East and another for the West...This long list branches out endlessly.

However, Islam, by virtue of its inner logic, discarded (and will discard) all these new ideas. It has foiled all attempts to fragmentize it or to distort its doctrinal ideology, whether through literal or distorting interpretations. But, rather than learning the lesson from this case and gaining more confidence in themselves, some Muslims are fearful of globalization and its presumed dangers, though they certainly realize that the decision of participation in it or not goes beyond our existing technical and material faculties, and this attitude also asserts the presumed contradiction between the universality of Islam and globalization.

(1) Abû Al-A'la Al-Mawdûdî, The theory of Islam and its guidance in policy and law, Beirut, Damascus, Darul-Fikr, 1964, p. 361.

Dualism of Universality and Globalization:

Contrary to what is commonly believed, it will be easier for Islam to remain firm in the era of globalization than in the pre-globalization era. This is because globalization – despite the immensity of its technical means in spreading its hegemony and its being an overwhelming movement – moves without a soul. Therefore, it lacks the factors of attraction and influence that dominated the pre-globalization era. It is known that the modern material instruments would have a limited influence if they carry no message to present to the world. Hence, it is necessary to reconsider the values that were at the core of the age of globalization and their effects in the formation of the character of what we may metaphorically call "the universal citizen".

First, let us define the concept of globalization, understand the values it preaches, and compare its values to those of the pre-globalization period. We avoided describing it as 'universal' because the reader may confuse it with the universality of Islam[1] . Then, we will prove the assumption we support concerning the future of Islam under globalization.

Definitions of globalization vary, but there is a consensus that globalization is an embodiment of the will of great powers to dominate others, or rather of one great power that seeks to turn the whole world into one universal society. This society is ruled by one code of laws and led by one particular code of values. This is achieved by controlling communication between people (both the means and content), the economy (in the processes of production and marketing), and technology (in terms of design and production). The reason of imposing these controls is to dominate the means of knowledge and resources of wealth. Given this definition, how could it be alleged that the condition of Islam will be better under the principles of globalization than in the pre-globalization era? Therefore, what is the input that Muslims can present in this field in order to

(1) The universal culture, however developed or prominent it is, became universal due to its own characteristics and special entity; because others praised it, it became universal. Thus, universality refers to having the right by a certain culture to be called so and receiving this right from other cultures, while globalization is what is attributed by a certain civilization to itself and imposed upon others. We hope the honorable reader will remember this meaning whenever he faces this term (universality). Every culture has the right to claim that it is universal, but the real criterion is: Do others consider it so or not? This is the meaning of having the right. The quality of universality is abstract and not necessarily positive; moreover, Islam is not distinguished by its universality as far as it is distinguished by the nature of this universality as it is a mercy for all mankind.

claim that Muslims are able – if the necessary conditions are fulfilled – to gradually regain their role as a civilization.

So, what are the conditions that should be met?

The Western civilization in the pre-globalization period sought to address the world in an attractive style, so it could cover its injustices against other peoples. It attracted the world by talking about rationality, tolerance, freedom, justice and equity. Then, it tried to follow the policy of openness to other cultures, concentrating on values that are fully or partially shared with the West in an attempt to develop the special aspects of these cultures and raise them to the level of the universal culture. Globalization on the other hand is not based on the logic of containment but on the logic of penetration; it does not recognize the value of cultural particularities. Rather, it aims to eliminate them, specifically those particularities that help cultures to resist, confront and preserve their principles.

In the pre-globalization period, the Western civilization aimed at forming a general awareness based on the voluntary satisfaction of individuals and groups, so making them partially or fully comply with its values. But in the period of globalization, it is no longer important that an individual is satisfied with these values or not. It seeks to turn individuals into vessels that can be filled and emptied without being aware of the difference between the two operations. This, according to `Abdul-Wahhâb Al-Misîrî, means "the absence of mind, i.e., the talent with which man accumulates experiences and achievements. As a result, there appeared what is called 'the memory of crosswords', i.e. scattered information that is totally unconnected, so one feels that he lives in the everlasting present which is incessantly changing but has no connection with the past or the future, and permanent experiences without any depth or meaning. History becomes mere stagnant intervals and superficial ages without any particular signifi cance. The present, past and future coincide, and all people follow the same pattern, have the same entity, talk about the same subjects, lead the same human life and possess the same objects. But, in reality, this concurrence is not continuous, so a complete rupture happens"[1]

Man no longer proceeds intentionally or with a certain purpose. What matters is to proceed without stopping, because if he stopped he may ask himself about the purpose of his journey. It is intended for him to keep

(1) `Abdul-Wahhâb Al-Misîrî, Fathî At-Trîkî, p. 164.

feeling lost in the midst of an inane spiral movement, with no aim but satisfying his physical desires. Here appear the points of weakness in the man of globalization, as well as the points through which Muslims can present a qualitative input to humanity. This is because permissiveness or the culture of "the deliquescent animal", as Al-Misîrî named it, is not merely a moral deviation or uncontrolled whim, but it is a regulated strategy to change human nature. It is a program carried out in various fields to dispose the remaining moral values in the name of tolerance and defending kinds of perversion that are considered by its proponents as a form of expression of the ever-changing human nature. Moreover, the artistic taste was reduced to the attainment of the pleasures of food and sex, after stripping the attire of righteousness from them.

One may ask why some assert that they consider permissiveness, in its wider sense, as the weakest link in the status quo of the Western civilization. Without a doubt, this moral permissiveness is closely related to the philosophical foundations of modernity, its emergence and development. But this permissiveness did not turn into a culture that could be reflected by artistic, intellectual or literary composition except in the present time.

Rather, it even became the ultimate goal of life. This does not mean that the Western civilization in the pre-globalization period did not witness forms of permissiveness, but, other than this, it possessed many attractive potentialities that dazzled those who recognized its realistic values. Hence, it was not easy to embrace it without making cracks in the edifice of the Islamic civilization, which still exist to date and require great efforts to mend them.

Western civilization in the pre-globalization period valued man's mental faculties and the principles of justice and freedom. It is necessary to consider these potentialities when they started to emerge and also their immense impact. Therefore, we should not limit our vision to their present consequences or the way the modern man, who describes himself as a civilized man, behaves with others. Modernity brought the Christians back to the circle of action, while the Muslims left it a long time ago.

It is not easy for a nation to wake up and regain its civilization and human position at a time when the blows of the dominant victor, who is full of pride of his spectacular material successes, are continuing; and at a time of a prevailing misconception that a universal inevitability is being imposed on all people. In fact, this is the inevitability of constant deterioration, namely, from monotheism to wickedness, and then to disbelief. So, history is

deteriorating from good to bad. The more Muslims go away from the golden Islamic age, the more rapid their deterioration will be. The state of the people of the South helped, in its wider economic sense, to make a split between two ongoing events, which were extremely significant in the history of the West. At the time when the French philosophers were founding the principles of reason, the European armies were annihilating the Red Indians in America and settling colonies that would later become the USA. This is what was noticed by the excellent critic French philosopher, Michel Serres.

Today, the victories of the man of globalization are not met with welcome and admiration in the Muslim world; rather they are met with resentment and disdain, especially after the unveiling of his false mask of enlightenment and his cruelty in dealing with the Muslim world, which reminds us of his cruelty with the native Indian Americans. Actually, the alleged enlightenment of globalization has lost its credibility and its elements of attraction now are restricted to materialism and consumerism, which could preserve their permanent progress and dominance, thanks only to their legal and illegal dependence on the resources of the subjugated people.

It is not easy for a nation that adopts the culture of imitation and submission to superstitions, as well as giving up thinking of what it cannot achieve - after possessing the civilization of intellect and knowledge in the past - to withstand the invading rationality. But, it is easy for it to reformulate rationality at the time of globalization, in which rational thinking has disappeared and become merely an instrument controlled by instincts and not vice versa. Hence, all matters in the view of the instrumental mind have become equal, and standards of judgment have vanished.

The relativity of cognition, morality and aestheticism was dominated by disillusionment. So, this mind lost its ability to advance further and its essential priority became how to adapt itself with an uncontrolled and irrationalized reality. This supports our view that this nation should have a qualitative input to rationalize critical thinking so that it elevates the critical mind to the highest standards, which the ethics of the Frankfurt School failed to achieve, because it could not overstep the fences of modernity. However, this can be achieved by reconnecting the intellectual mind with the sacredness of religion, arming it with standards which free it from the material limitations, and helping it to realize the ultimate aim of human existence.

It is not easy for a civilization that witnessed types of social injustice and political despotism to compete with another that nominally declared

freedom and social justice as its slogan. These values carried attractive elements which had a magic effect on people that could make them forget the injustice that had been committed against them. However, notwithstanding this, Islam has the aptitude to prove its ability to resist political despotism and social injustice, and invest and assimilate these values. Thus, why then is there a fear of globalization and its values, though it does not possess the factors of attraction of the previous stage?!!

Muslims can be more effective in shaping the culture of globalization, which is based on the idea of individualism and survival of the strongest. The individual's thinking was restricted to his own concerns; he ignored cooperation and became afraid of the future because globalization returned him back to the era of capitalism and its cruel ways.

The social values which were dominant at the time of capitalism were strong. Moreover, the social movements could achieve a lot of gains and wrench some rights from capitalism which abated its intensity. It is not right to think that the collapse of the socialist camp, which achieved nothing for the poor, has closed the file of social justice for ever.

The social gains achieved by the conflict between capitalism and socialism are at stake. The number of unemployed people is on the rise, and social problems, which are basically aggravated, will become exacerbated. For example, one who loses his job would feel frustrated and agonized. Losing one's job is like losing the blood running in his veins. Hence, we understand why humanitarian and social organizations work hard to resist the policies of globalization, especially those related to the international trade agreements. These organizations realize that the expansion of the international economic companies will occur at the expense of the authority of the state. Accordingly, the weakness of the state will result in failure to fulfill its social duties.

Josef E. Stiglitz rightly said, "The contemporary technological war was devised in order to extirpate any direct confrontation. For instance, bombs are dropped from a 1500 meter height so that the pilot does not feel the consequential ugliness of his act. Likewise, the contemporary administration of the economy follows the same tactic. From a high room in a luxurious hotel, politics are easily designated and imposed, which could result in a reconsideration if we knew the number of their victims" (1)

(1) Josef E. Stiglitz, La Grand désillusion (Paris: Fayard, 2002) p. 52.

In the period of pre-globalization the material civilization could create and accumulate things and ideologies. But in the period of globalization everything has been materialized and so has come to lose its meaning.

Thus, in such a horrible world, Islam can, if Muslims rightly understood the dynamics of the modern challenges, contribute a specific input in order to restore the real, upright face of humanity to the world. The present condition of the world deepens the attitude of passive neutrality. So, we should not be deceived by what we see of the immensely developed means of communication. This coincides with a constant decline in communication between people. So, what is the use of these massive means of communication while the value of communication is almost absent? Man may own or use different means of communication, mobile or immobile, yet he is unaware of what occurs in his narrow surroundings.

This is exactly like residents in a hotel: they use the same elevator, then they each go in different directions to their rooms, to their individual worlds. No one thinks of checking on the other, rather one is not prompted to think of contacting the others in the first place. The initiative of communicating with the other is subject to the immediate material interests that result from communication. Therefore, these developed means of communication did not lead to strengthening social bonds, but they afforded facilities to achieve more material benefits without achieving the social communication that the Glorious Qur'ân described as 'acquaintance'. This acquaintance implies recognizing the other and taking the initiative to know him with no prior deliberation of gaining any material benefit, and not to know one another by name only. Everything has become brief and temporary, including friendships, neighborhoods, and even family relations, which deeply consolidated passive neutrality.

Visual media, which divested any production of values, concentrated on the sense of sight, or rather the action of pure visualization, which contains no symbolic meaning. The symbolic meaning was lost because of repetition and rapid presentation of various images. In such a world which has developed advanced technologies of means of communication, the emotional and social interactions are missing. This is a paradoxical equation that the man of globalization is experiencing; the more his means of communication with the other vary, the more he feels that his horizons are increasingly shrinking day by day, becoming surrounded by his ndividuality and suffocated by his cruelty. Meanwhile, he feels that he is lost in a borderless space.

It is worth mentioning that globalization with its wide spread consumerist culture will be a fertile environment to revitalize Islamic values. The world now is in dire need of a spirit that gives meaning to its actions and that restores to man his kingdom of humanity. Muslims should seriously re-evaluate their position and correct themselves. This requires making use of the gains of technological development, and contributing a qualitative input to values. Besides, they cannot be prisoners of deceiving questions. So, the world needs those who can rationalize communication and effectuate it by recognizing and becoming acquainted with others, which will eventually lead to mutual cooperation. The world needs those who defend human rights against political despotism and economic utilitarianism; those who consider the divinely conferred honor of man as the guiding principle that governs these rights. Any violation of these rights, whatever its source, must be vehemently condemned. Standing up for these rights should not be subject to any material interest or sensitive religious or political affiliation. Defending the victim is an appreciated merit in itself.

Thereby, there is no reason for anxiety about the universality of Islam in the world of globalization. However, the overspread of globalization may fill Muslims with concern if Muslims remain a prey to political despotism and a victim of social injustice. Muslims may even feel that confrontation of globalization is not possible, withdrawing from this confrontation to self-isolation, if the same regimes remain in power and make the strengthening of their self-security apparatus their main priority, instead of assuring security to their citizens. These regimes, unfortunately, fill the hearts of their citizens with fear and terror instead of assuring equal opportunities and facilitating humanly decent conditions to the people so as to assist them in overcoming the difficulties of life from which the Muslim nation suffers.

Hence, readiness to positively and effectively deal with different variables of the modern world begins here. Failure to achieve this will give globalization the power to rise and prevail, benefiting from the weakness of the Muslim world.

When Muslims become free and honored in their homeland, all sides in the conflict will stand on equal footing, and the question about how to deal with the challenges of globalization will be the business of all forces of the nation.

Conclusion
Dualism and False Questions

Dualisms hinder critical investigation and cripple productive work. It is the source of false questions, and false questions drive to false answers. A false answer does not solve a debated problem, but it adds to its complexity. So, this produces what is called "false awareness", which is characterized by its moving around within the same circle without being aware that the horizon is closed before its motion. This is because it deals with a complex reality using a simple-minded intellect which acts according to the logic of white or black. Problems seem to be isolated from each other, so one who treats them in the light of dualism imagines that their solutions are isolated too. Consequently, problems remain unsolved or even pile up and their solution becomes extremely difficult.

Accordingly, one of the methods of developing the Islamic discourse is by freeing its major questions from this dualism, so dialogue becomes possible and the agreement to reach out the least measures of purposeful and rational action will be achieved.

The rigidity that we notice in the Islamic discourse reflects the absence of the free man who possesses the instruments of critical thinking and action. Approaching the issues with this presumed contradiction inevitably shrouds Islamic discourse with a spirit of exclusion and a tendency to be incongruent, which were deeply consolidated by the climate of political despotism and social injustice.

Intellect, even when it is self-critical, cannot effectively work or produce innovations except in a climate where freedom of thought and the least degree of social security are guaranteed for man. Man can only benefit from others' experiences when he believes that the truth, if it is formulated from human efforts, is necessarily relative and no one can claim to possess the ultimate and absolute truth.

Hence, we realize why "the discourse" which is characterized by dualism fails to comprehend reality. This is because reality is ever-changeable and cannot be subjected to restrictive rules. None of the constituents of reality can be ignored or canceled. Raising the awareness of this serious issue has started to cause some fruitful results, as it has produced some positive aspects in Islamic discourse by the gradual dismissal of the logic of complete rejection or complete acceptance. Now we can see more reliance on the approach of critical openness within the frame of a comprehensive cognitive view which is able to assimilate all the important elements of human civilization.

Contemporary Islamic Discourse
Flaws of Confusion and Shallowness

Dr. 'Abdul-Hamîd Ahmad Abû Sulaymân (*)

The nation's thinkers, educators and officials should seriously and comprehensively reconsider our contemporary culture, ways of thinking and public discourse to identify and remedy the weaknesses so that our nation can recover its vigor and well-being as a civilization.

This commendable initiative of the Qatar Research and Studies Center to investigate the issue of Islamic discourse is of utmost importance in such an era when the Islamic nation is experiencing an unprecedented state of weakness. It should be taken quite seriously and responsibly by Muslim scholars, educators and intellectuals. Unless the Islamic public discourse is rendered powerful enough to introduce effective diagnoses of our reality and successful remedies for our problems, it will, in essence, remain a useless speech that only "caters for" the backwardness of the nation.

Though different in race, color, region and language, the Muslim societies all stand weak, corrupt and backward. This can only be attributed to the common cultural elements of these societies, which result mainly from their similar public discourses.

(*) Academic and thinker (KSA).

Intellectual vs. Political Discourse

The crux of the matter is that our nation suffers from an identity crisis. As far back as 1,000 years ago, Imâm Abû Hâmid Al-Ghazâlî documented this problematic state in a couple of his most notable writings: (i) *Revival of the Religious Sciences* (which implied that the religious culture was in big trouble), and (ii) *The Refutation of Philosophers* (highlighting a terrible confusion within the philosophical life).

Over centuries, the crisis got even worse and worse despite the reform efforts attempting to overcome it. It is true that such efforts more or less helped the nation, but they could hardly stop things declining. The problems related to our culture and Islamic discourse, both on the religious and worldly levels, still exist and the long-term reform efforts are not as effective and in-depth as they should be. The journey towards reform is still long and depends mostly on how successful the reformers mobilize the intelligentsia's energies to rectify any ideological, social and educational problems in our culture.

The reformative movements' focus on the political area and on techniques and details is just an escape from reality. This results from the restrictions created by the cultural and educational agencies within the overall "intimidating", traditional, Islamic discourse.

Political activity alone, without invigorating the nation's mind and awareness, will never solve its problems or actually develop its potential. Under the principles of global conflicts and challenges, this will be a waste of energy and a useless effort that may lead, often unconsciously, to more deterioration and more crises.

Therefore, the intellectual and educational space should be given the opportunity to contribute to reform. The sound Islamic view should be frankly and deeply communicated to the nation, so diagnosing reality, showing the solutions and inspiring hope and self-confidence. The nation should overcome the cultural obstacles and negative discourse inherited from the past times of sluggishness and superficiality.

The intellectual reform, achieved partly through the refinement of the Islamic discourse, is the first step towards bringing the nation into the desired religious, cultural and educational state. Only then will the nation be ready to develop and to accomplish its mission.

A top priority at this stage should be to give critical thinking the opportunity to contribute to reform and revitalize the nation's energies, which will provide the political agents with power to act and achieve desired goals.

First of all, it is essential to investigate why the attempts to enhance the Islamic discourse are unsuccessful. We should understand the nature of the crisis and the factors which further aggravate it (mainly, the reluctant traditional thought and the narrow horizon of official policy). Then, we should act to remove these negative factors so that the nation can settle its identity crisis.

The problem of flawed public discourse occurred initially when the civil society's intellectuals were overpowered by the sectarian political forces. This intellectual-political schism resulted in intellectual isolation and debilitation, which gradually turned the early cultural richness, creativity and ingenuity into rigid, weak ideologies.

Naturally, this conceptual and ideological deterioration was reflected in the quality and objectives of the public discourse as well as in its effects on the Muslim's holistic vision and personality.

A lack of holistic vision is one of the most dangerous diseases affecting any society, since this is the framework for the nation's concepts, values and efforts. Without such a vision, it will be like having a very powerful but dismantled machine; however good the pieces are, the machine will never be productive unless the pieces are fastened together correctly to make it a real machine. Analogously, although we revere and propagate our cultural values and beliefs, they do not have real effects on our lives, simply because they are taken only as separate parts.

In such a situation, the failure of public discourse was an inevitable result of the above mentioned split between the ideological and political figures. It turned from a liberal, creative and insightful public discourse into a repressive, one-sided and shallow discourse; one that was unpractical, lacked a purposeful and comprehensive approach, and was unaware of the spatial and temporal dimensions of matters.

Since then, the public discourse has relied on malicious claims and has used severe accusations, originally intended for the cruel society members, against the innocent Muslim populations who suffer from a cycle of poverty, ignorance and disease as well as political suppression and corruption. This "intimidating" public discourse has served the interests of

the political elite, advocated devious beliefs and doctrines, and crushed the societies' public spirit which alone defends their rights and better their lives.

So, no wonder the Islamic nation has eventually become in such a state of excessive weakness and division. It is suffering from defective views, an unhealthy culture, inefficient institutions and "crushed" populations. Individualism, self-seeking and a sense of insecurity mark today's Muslim society, where the individual's perceptions of life and future have become too negative. Abuse of power is the only language that the governments use with their political dissenters.

Political dictatorship, combined with the intimidating religious discourse (which talks all the time about death, Hellfire and the terrible torture which will be inflicted on the Muslims for their sins), partially explain why the Islamic nation is so passive and uninspired. Occasionally, desperate outbursts are made in response to a political and ideological dictatorship, but soon they are subdued by means of suppression. This iterative cycle augments the nation's crisis, depletes its energies and cripples its dedication to global welfare.

An example of confusion and poor mentality was clear in a lecture presented in an international conference on Pan-Islamic unity. The speaker, it seemed, had no prior knowledge about the subject, and so the lecture was too clumsy and inane. Trying to save face, he irrelevantly changed to his favorite topic related to the horrors of death. Actually, it was a very picture of intellectual impotence: He proceeded to frighten the audience hoping that he could influence them and prevent them from critically evaluating his speech.

Another example of intellectual terrorism was displayed by an orator who discussed the issue of growing one's beard. He did not have much to tell about the wisdom behind it, nor did he make any loving effort to persuade the audience, most of whom were beardless. Although this is a controversial issue among scholars, he chose to intimidate the audience by dealing with it as a matter of belief or lack of belief, not just an appearancerelated issue. He assumed that those who shaved off their beards did not believe in this act of *Sunnah*, and thus they were considered disbelievers.

The real problem is the ideology which allows this sort of discourse to use religious and cultural principles randomly without scholarly verification or any discipline that combines various sources of knowledge, realizes different sides of the issues at hand and is aware of the social context. This "intimidating" ideology lacks sound knowledge and effective techniques

which are needed to create brilliant minds, integrated personalities and, ultimately, powerful nations.

Given that formal Islamic education is introduced through this very discourse, it has the same poor performance and undesirable effects. This can be seen in the general public's weak responsiveness to the religious and moral material. Schoolchildren show reluctant attitudes towards the religious curricula, largely because their content and methods of teaching are not adapted to the needs and interests of the school age group, nor do they adopt more modern and liberal educational theories.

In this context, the Prophet (PBUH) can be relevantly cited as a perfect example of a good parent and educator. He was very kind and lenient when treating children and youths, and he never beat or frightened a child. Being fully aware of their special nature and mentality, he knew how to address them using the most effective and affectionate instruction.

An example of the Prophet's gentle and insightful treatment of youths is the Following *Hadîth*: *«A young man came to the Prophet (PBUH) and said, 'O Messenger of Allah! Give me permission to commit Zinâ (i.e. fornication).' The people surrounded him and rebuked him saying, 'Stop! Stop!' The Prophet said, 'Come close.' The young man came to him and sat down. The Prophet said, 'Would you like it (i.e. Zinâ) for your mother?' He said, 'No, by Allah! May Allah make me a ransom for you.' The Prophet said, 'And people also do not like it for their mothers. Would you like it for your daughter?' He said, 'No, by Allah! O Allah's Messenger! May Allah make me a ransom for you.' The Prophet said, 'And people also do not like it for their daughters. Would you like it for your sister?' He said, 'No, by Allah! May Allah make me a ransom for you.' The Prophet said, 'And people also do not like it for their sisters. Would you like it for your paternal aunt?' He said, 'No, by Allah! May Allah make me a ransom for you.' The Prophet said, 'And people also do not like it for their paternal aunts. Would you like it for your maternal aunt?' He said, 'No, by Allah! May Allah make me a ransom for you.' The Prophet said, 'And people also do not like it for their maternal aunts.' Then the Prophet put his hand on him and said, 'O Allah! Forgive his sin, purify his heart and guard his chastity.' From then on, the young man never paid attention to anything of that nature. »*[1].

(1) Related by Imâm Ahmad in his *Musnad*, 21185.

Here, we can highlight some points of interest. First, the Prophet realized that the sexual desire of the young man was a natural feeling for his developmental stage as an adolescent, not a perverse drive moved by an evil personality. With this knowledge, he calmed those around him who felt angry at the young man's behavior, and kindly brought the young man closer to him. The young man's problem was not that he did not know the impermissibility of *Zinâ* and its severe punishment, but rather he was seeking advice to alleviate his suffering. Wisely, the Prophet called on the young man's conscience and moral norms to guard him against temptation. Then, he prayed to Allah that the young man might have inner protection and self-discipline.

The Qur'anic Universal Approach: A Key to the Solution:

Having discussed the problems and weaknesses of the contemporary Islamic discourse, we find it suitable to look for a solution. The Islamic thought should be inspired in the first place by the original sources of Islam: the Glorious Qur'ân (the perfect universal and timeless constitution for humankind) and the Prophetic *Sunnah* (which should be considered in the light of its time-specific and place-specific circumstances). The Islamic culture needs to be filtered to find out and remove all superstitions, Israelitic distortions and other "foreign antigens" which negatively affect the Muslim beliefs and practices.

The Muslim thinkers should be mindful of the special nature of the Islamic doctrinal and cultural system, which is quite different from other cultural systems. This will help prevent confusion, vacillation and blind imitation. It is extremely dangerous to be dazzled and overwhelmed by the modern Western materialistic civilization, which no longer appreciates humane, spiritual and moral values.

We have to avoid the mistakes of being confused and having a lack of methodological discipline, and realize the temporal and spatial dimensions of the formation and development of societies and cultures. We have to restore the pure Islamic doctrines which inspire Muslims to assume their pioneering role, noble universal message and flawless ideology. The Islamic social system should never make religion and devoutness subject to the control and exploitation of those in power. It should be built on mutual and honest consultation; free persuasion; and belief in the virtues of brotherhood, justice, mercy and peace.

The Glorious Qur'ân, the Heavenly Book, is the unique and most comprehensive source of Islamic ideology, values and concepts. We should act on it wisely, along with our Prophet's *Sunnah*, when building and leading our lives. It is this combination of the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah* that transformed the primitive nomadic tribes of ancient Arabia into a nation of enlightenment and guidance that revolutionized the world and opened the door to the subsequent human achievements and scientific advancements in the civilization.

Unfortunately, the contemporary international cultures have not assimilated the Islamic ideals or understood the principle of the "power of justice", which springs from the fact that we all are inferior to one Power: The Lord God. In fact, the current materialistic, sensual and secular nature of the Western cultures is the result of their belief of "justice of power", which is the literal translation of the law of the jungle. This has made the modern world a place of immorality, racism, imperialism, a place where innocent civilians are killed and families and societies are disintegrated.

When we carefully consider the Glorious Qur'ân, we will find complete conformity between the innate human nature and the Qur'anic perception of man. The Qur'anic view guides human action; helps realize sublime human objectives; supports the inner powers of goodness; and enhances motivation for work, benevolence and development. As perceived in his real and pure nature, man is chosen to be the "viceroy" of his Lord God in the universe. Allah, the Almighty, has entitled man to the mastery of the universe; He prepared the universe to meet his needs and contribute to his welfare; provided him with instruments (i.e. reasoning, sight, hearing, speech and other tools of perception) [1] to use it as he wishes; favored him with willpower and free choice; and entrusted him with the responsibility of

(1) Here are some examples of Qur'anic Verses which deal with the nature of man: ***{And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I am going to make upon the earth a viceroy"... And He taught Adam... "So, whoever follows My Guidance there shall be no fear on them, nor will they grieve."}*** [Al-Baqarah (The Cow):30-38], ***{"He has taught man that which he knew not."}*** [Al-`Alaq (The Clot):5], ***{"Recite, and your Lord is the most Generous."}*** [Al-`Alaq (The Clot): 3], ***{"He created man, (and) taught him eloquence."}*** [Ar-Rahmân (The All-Merciful):3-4], ***{"And Allah has brought you out from the wombs of your mothers knowingnothing, and He made for you hearing, vision and hearts (i.e. intellect)that perhaps you would be grateful (to Him)."}*** [An-Nahl (The Bees): 78], ***{"(Allah is) Who perfected everything which He created and He began the creation of man from clay. Then He made his offspring out of the extract of a liquid disdained (i.e. sperms and eggs). Then He proportioned him and breathed into him the soul (created by Allah for him) and He made for you hearing, vision and hearts (i.e. intellect); (but) little are you grateful (to Him)."}*** [As-Sajdah (The Prostration): 7-9].

making the world a better place[1] by means of creativity, cooperation, justice, love, mercy, peace and spirituality. This is the Divine purpose for which humankind was created on the earth, as intended by Allah and as manifested by His Qur'ân.

In its early childhood, humanity had little knowledge. It began to explore, learn and develop over millions and millions of years. Now, we can split the nucleus, invade the space, explore the bottoms of oceans and draw a map for the genomes. Only Allah knows what technologies and scientific advancements in the future will bring for the world.

However, the more humanity progresses and acts to its full potential, the closer it will be to its end. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿... ***When the earth has taken on its adornment and is beautified, and its people have thought that they have all the powers of disposal over it, there comes to it Our Command by night or by day, and We make it like a clean-mown harvest, as if it had not flourished yesterday (i.e. before). Thus do We explain in detail the signs (and lessons) for a people who reflect.*** ﴾ [Yûnus (Jonah): 24]

Then, humanity will be eventually brought into the "realm of the soul" and eternity, where they will receive retribution for their deeds (whether good or evil). Allah says: ﴿***For those who have done good is the best (reward; i.e. the Paradise) and even more (i.e. the supreme honor of seeing the Countenance of Allah, Glory be to Him), and neither darkness nor humiliation shall cover their faces. They are the dwellers of the Paradise; therein they will abide eternally.***﴾ [Yûnus (Jonah): 26]

(1) Here are some examples of the accountability of man for his own actions: {***"Indeed, we offered the Trust (i.e. responsibility for fulfilling all the duties which Allah has ordained and the accountability of free choice) to the heavens, the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it (i.e. lest they would be subject to the Punishment of Allah if they did wrong); but man (proceeded to) bear it. Indeed, he was unjust (to himself) and ignorant (of its results)."***} [Al-Ahzâb (The Allied Parties): 72]. {***"And (by) the soul and Him who proportioned it and inspired it (with discernment of) its wickedness and its righteousness, he has succeeded who purifies it and he has failed who corrupts it."***} [Ash-Shams (The Sun): 7-10]. {***"Have We not made for him two eyes, a tongue and two lips; and shown him the two ways (of good and evil)? But he has not attempted to pass on the path that is steep (i.e. the path which will lead to goodness and success)."***} [Al-Balad (The City): 8-11]

He also says: ﴿... ***And (Allah will) recompense those who have done good with the best (reward i.e. the Paradise).*** ﴾ [An-Najm (The Star): 31]

﴿ ... ***And do good; indeed, Allah loves the doers of good.*** ﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 195]

﴿ ***So Allah gave them the reward of this world and the good reward of the Hereafter...*** ﴾ [Âl-`Imrân (The Household of `Imrân): 148]

﴿... ***And We shall surely give them their reward (in the Hereafter) according to the best of what they used to do.*** ﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees): 97]

﴿ ***So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.*** ﴾ [Az-Zalzalah (The Earthquaking): 7-8]

The Prophet (PBUH) said: «***In man's sexual intercourse (with one's wife), there is a reward.***»(1)

Furthermore, he said: «***If the Hour (i.e. the Hereafter) is established while there is a sprig in the hand of one of you, then if he can plant it before he stands up, he should do it.*** »(2)

Human nature is designed to work, innovate, thrive and enjoy the blessings and good of the world, not to degrade, abuse or corrupt. This life is a trial to find out the good souls who deserve honor and pleasure, and the evil souls who should be deprived and suffer (in the Hereafter). The Islamic perception of the universe, humankind and life is not something that is imposed or arbitrary. It serves inherent human purposes; makes human existence meaningful; and orientates human motives towards positive action, creativity and development. This is governed by good intentions, Heavenly Guidance and the essentially benevolent human nature. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿... ***So follow not the lusts (of your hearts), lest you avoid justice.*** ﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 135]

﴿... ***And when you judge between people, you judge with justice.*** ﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 58]

﴿...***Stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah, even though it be against yourselves or your parents and relatives...*** ﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 135]

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(1) Related by Muslim.
(2) Related be Ahmad.

﴿*And whenever you give your word (i.e. judge between people or give evidence), say the truth even if (it is against) a near relative.*﴾ [Al-An`âm (Cattle): 152]

﴿*O, you who have believed! Stand out firmly for Allah, as just witnesses, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do.*﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 8]

﴿*Indeed, Allah enjoins justice, good conduct and giving (help) to (needy) relatives, and forbids immorality, abominable conduct and oppression. He admonishes you, that you may take heed.*﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees):90]

Anything that is for the sake of goodness, justice or peace is a haracteristic of Muslims. They stick to such merits and enjoy their reward, both in this worldly life and in the Hereafter. Allah says: ﴿*Say (O Muhammad, "Who has forbidden the adornment with clothes given by Allah, which He has produced for His servants and the good (lawful) things of provision?" Say, "They are for those who believe (along with the disbelievers), in the worldly life, (but) exclusively (for the believers), on the Day of Resurrection." Thus We detail the verses (i.e. Islamic laws) for a people who have knowledge.*﴾ [Al-A`râf (The Battlements): 32]

He also says: ﴿*... Every time they will be provided with a fruit there from, they will say, "This is what we were provided with before."And they will be given things in resemblanc. They will have therein purified wives and they will abide therein forever.*﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 25]

Thus, the universal Islamic approach is based on constructive monotheistic; one that fulfills human nature and calls for hard work and production.

Allah says: ﴿*Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession (of authority) upon the earth...*﴾ [An-Nûr (The Light): 55]

The righteous deeds include any action that is done well and is aimed at benefiting others and bettering their lives, not just recitation of the

Qur'ân, prayer, fasting and other acts of worship[1]. Such acts make sense only when they guide one to do good in his life. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) said: "***Perhaps a fasting person will get nothing from his fast but hunger, and perhaps the one who stands to pray at night will get nothing from his standing except sleeplessness.***" [Related by Ibn Mâjah]

Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***...Verily, prayer prevents immorality and wrongdoing...***﴾ [Al-'Ankabût (The Spider): 45], ﴿***So woe unto those performers of prayers (i.e. hypocrites) who are unmindful of their prayers, do good deeds only to be seen (and admired by others), and prevent small kindnesses.***﴾ [Al-Mâ'ûn (Kindnesses): 4-7], ﴿***We have not sent down the Qur'ân unto you (O Muhammad) to cause you distress, but only as a Reminder to those who fear (Allah).***﴾ [Tâ-Hâ: 2-3], ﴿***Verily, we have sent down to you (O Muhammad) the Book (i.e. the Qur'ân) for humankind in truth. So whosoever accepts the guidance it is only for his own self (i.e. in his interest), and whosoever goes astray does so only against it (i.e.it is him who will be the loser). And you are not a guardian over them (i.e. responsible for their deeds).***﴾ [Az-Zumar (The Hordes):41], ﴿***This is the Book (i.e. the Qur'ân), whereof there is no doubt, a guidance for the pious.***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 2] ﴿***... (We have sent Muhammad; PBUH) purifying you and teaching you the Book (i.e. the Qur'ân) and the Wisdom (i.e. Sunnah, Islamic laws and Fiqh)...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 151], ﴿***...There has come to you from Allah a light (i.e. Prophet Muhammad; PBUH) and a clear Book (i.e. the Qur'ân).***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 15], ﴿***And as to those who hold fast to the***

(1) The above mentioned Qur'anic Verse illustrates how to be successful in this world. For any nation to become powerful, it should have faith, which represents inner motivation and willpower. However, just having faith will mean nothing if it does not lead to work, which, in turn, should be governed by a well-thought out methodology or plan of action. For example, to extract oil from the land, you need first to decide that you want it. Then, you examine the potential oil sites and available technology. Once you have determined where and how you will do it, you proceed to take action and exert the needed energy.
This is most evident in our modern world. When you are honest and benevolent, you become righteous, but not necessarily successful. To achieve practical success and superiority, you should use your mind, materials, science and technology. This applies to both Muslims and non-Muslims: That is, when the Muslim does something honestly and it turns out correct, he will receive two rewards; the benefit of the work (in this world) and the reward for the good intention (in the Hereafter). However, when he does his best but things go wrong, he will receive the reward of his good intention only. On the other hand, the reward of non-Muslims for doing something right will be restricted to the benefit and power they gain in this world, but none of them will get a reward in the Hereafter.

Book (i.e. act on the teachings of the Qur'ân) and perform prayer, certainly We shallnever waste the reward of those who do righteous deeds. ﴾ [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 170]

The Muslims' current state of division, backwardness and inferiority is the product of the distorted discourse, methodology and culture as well as the absence of powerful institutions and a sense of responsibility among the society members. This has weakened the essential motivation needed to seek a better life, which Allah created in humans to be the highest purpose of their existence.

One ideological flaw resulting from the confused and coercive discourse is the Muslims' paradoxical perception of Allah. Originally, Muslims revered Allah and feared Him more than anything. But over centuries of regression, fear has become so much greater than reverence that most of today's Muslims lack a sense of love and devotion to Allah. This contradicts the following Qur'anic judgment: ﴿... ***But those who believe are stronger in love for Allah (than for anything else)...*** ﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 165]

Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) said: «***None among you will attain faith until Allah and His Messenger become dearer to him than anything else.***»[1]

This does not imply that the believers whom the Qura'n refers to are no longer found in this time, but rather it indicates that Muslims are really suffering an ideological problem that they should explore and get rid of. The fact is that the Islamic nation is faithful by nature. Muslims love Allah because they substantially love goodness, justice, mercy and peace, which are represented in their perfect forms in Allah, Exalted be He. Similarly, Muslims hate evil, falsehood, injustice, harshness and aggression because they are the traits of Satan. Unfortunately, as a result of the coercive discourse, Muslims have lost their "orientation" and sense of identity. The Islamic discourse does not differentiate between true believers and bad persons. It addresses Muslims using the descriptions given by the Qur'ân as being those who are ignorant, deviant, doing wrong, committing sins, etc.!

First of all, it should be widely known that the Muslim individual is intrinsically good. Allah knows well the conflict between good and evil within the human personality. With His Heavenly Forgiveness and Eternal Mercy, Allah loves those who repent of their sins and ask Him for forgiveness.

(1) Related by Ahmad.

The Prophet (PBUH) said: «*By the One in Whose Hand is the soul of Muhammad! If you did not commit mistakes, Allah would bring other people who would commit mistakes and then ask Allah for forgiveness and He would forgive them.*»[1]

When the public discourse enables the Muslim to realize his real nature and the purpose of his life, using loving, considerate and enlightening ways, he will feel eager to work, build and prove himself. He will be willing to satisfy his Lord and, at the same time, revere Him with love and submission. If reverence of Allah is associated with fear and dread, it will make one despair, turn him away from his Lord and religion, and crush his motivation for work, creating a self-seeking mentality whose first drive in his life is his personal interests. It is unfortunate that the distorted Islamic discourse implicitly attaches deprivation to religious piety while attaching pleasure to the Devil, as though one thrives when following the Devil and fails when following Allah. Allah, Glory be to Him, says: ﴿*O children of Adam! Take your adornment (by wearing your clean clothes) at every Masjid (i.e. when going to the mosque for prayer), and eat and drink but waste not by extravagance. Indeed, He (i.e. Allah) likes not those who commit extravagance. Say (O Muhammad, "Who has forbidden the adornment of clothes given by Allah, which He has produced for His servants and the good (lawful) things of provision?" Say, "They are for those who believe (along with the disbelievers), in the worldly life, (but) exclusively (for the believers), on the Day of Resurrection." Thus We detail the verses (i.e. Islamic laws) for a people who have knowledge.*﴾ [Al-A`râf (The Battlements): 31-32]

﴿*O, you who have believed! Do not prohibit the good things which Allah has made lawful to you and do not transgress. Indeed, Allah does not like the transgressors. And eat of what Allah has provided for you (which is) lawful and good, and fear Allah in whom you are believers.* ﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 87-88]

﴿*... He (i.e. Allah) has brought you forth from the earth and settled you in it...* ﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 61]

Furthermore, the Prophet (PBUH) said: «*In man's sexual intercourse (with one's wife) there is a reward.* »[2]

(1) Related by Ahmad.
(2) Related by Muslim.

Whose Responsibility is it? Thinkers or Educators

The nation's thinkers, educators and officials ought to seriously and comprehensively reconsider our contemporary culture, ways of thinking and public discourse to identify and remedy the weaknesses so that our nation can (a) recover its vigor and well-being as a civilization; (b) build active institutions which eliminate negativity and corruption; (c) empower *Da'wah* (i.e. dissemination of Islamic teachings), religious education and religious media; (d) make the society's institutions independent from the executive authority; (e) give religion bigger social roles; and (f) stop exploitation of religion for the benefit of those in power who practice dictatorship and corruption.

Given the nation's current state of distorted culture, superficial discourse, traditional education, inadequate religious awareness and physical and intellectual dictatorship, it seems critical that the intelligentsia should strive to reform the religious, intellectual and educational discourses. This should involve parents, *Da'wah* organizations, the religious educational system and media agencies. The leaders of cultural life in the society should be elected by the general public and have reliable experiences and scholarly backgrounds to make sure that they are committed only to Islam and national interests, not to personal or partisan interests of individual politicians.

It is equally important to restructure the higher educational system in all academic specializations, introducing curricula which instill the unity of Islamic knowledge and motivation in the Muslim mentality and bring forth citizens with self-confidence and high devotion to develop and modernize the state.

Relevantly, we can cite the International Islamic University as one example or Malaysia's "Islamization of Knowledge" initiative, which emphasizes unity of knowledge, the institution of the family and creative thinking in Islamic educational literature and curricula. This attempt is worthy of consideration by the reform movements.

The Muslim thinkers, educators and scholars are the competent actors who can enforce change and intellectual reform in the nation, particularly

with regard to parental and school education. As traditionally believed in the field, education is both the problem and the solution.

On their way to reform, Muslims should understand that success depends on the actual, positive results, not on the initial, dreamy claims.

Otherwise, the result will be the present vanity, deficiency and clutter. Muslims should know that they are the nation of Islam, the Message of enlightenment and lofty spirituality. Such a nation should be equipped with power to support good in the face of the forces of evil5[1]. Allah says: ﴿*So whoever does an atom's weight of good will see it, and whoever does an atom's weight of evil will see it.*﴾ [Az-Zalzalah (The Earthquaking): 7-8], ﴿*He has succeeded who purifies it (i.e. his soul) and he has failed who corrupts it.*﴾ [Ash-Shams (The Sun): 9-10], ﴿*...Indeed, Allah wastes not the reward of the doers of good.*﴾ [At-Tawbah (Repentance):120], ﴿*(Allah is) Who has created death and life that He may test you, which of you is best in deed. And He is the Ever-Mighty, the Oft-Forgiving.*﴾ [Al-Mulk (The Kingdom):2], ﴿ *Indeed, We have made that which is on the earth as an adornment for it that We may test them (humankind) as to which of them is best in deed. And verily, We shall make (all) that which is on it a bare dry soil.* ﴾ [Al-Kahf (The Cave): 7-8], ﴿*And say (O Muhammad), "Do deeds! Allah will see your deeds, and (so will) His Messenger and the believers. And you will be brought back to the All-Knower of the unseen and the seen. Then He will inform you of what you used to do.*﴾ [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 105], ﴿*... (Allah said) "Work, O family of Dâwûd (i.e. David), with thanks!" But few of My servants are grateful.*﴾ [Saba' (Sheba): 13], ﴿*...(Allah says) "Never will I allow to be lost the work of (any)worker among you, be he male or female"...*﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of Imrân): 195], ﴿*Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession (of authority) upon the earth as He granted succession to those before them..* ﴾ [An-Nûr (The Light): 55]

(1) Allah, Exalted be He, describes how man becomes when he gives up his spirituality. He says: {...They (i.e. the Angels) said (to Allah): "Will You place in it (i.e. the earth) those (i.e. humankind) who will make mischief in it and shed blood"...} [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 30].

At the end of this paper, it is important to note that, because of the conflicts and crises currently affecting the nation, it is worrying that some people with personal biases and interests may exploit the critical and modernizing discourse in ways which go against the reformers' objectives of empowering the nation, maximizing its energies and developing its members.

Nothing should stop the nation's scholars and reformers from continuous endeavor. Reform should be preplanned and self-motivated, not performed haphazardly or in response to certain events or influences. Without determination and vigor, the nation's job will be some sort of "mission impossible".

Meditations on Contemporary Islamic Discourse

Prof. Ahmad Ar-Raysûnî(*)

Our Islamic discourse has to take into consideration that all Jews are not the same, all Christians are not the same, all Westerners are not the same, all Americans are not the same, all secularists are not the same, all our rulers and parties are not the same and even all corrupt people are not the same. Within all of these groups, there are the good and the evil, the fair and the malevolent.

The Islamic discourse involves all forms of rhetoric aimed at publicly introducing people to Islam and its foundations, and defending its beliefs and practical issues, with the purpose of talking people into accepting and following it.

Such rhetorical forms, whether oral or written, can focus on *Fiqhî* opinions and judgments; arguments about belief; explanations of the general Islamic social or legislative principles; sermons and advice; debates with dissenters; or discussions on affairs of life.

In all of these forms, as well as others, the Islamic discourse is just a human product. It is more or less influenced by its age and environment, and largely by its producer's background; way of thinking; and social, cultural and even geographical position.

(*) Professor of Fundamentals of Fiqh.. Mohammed V University (Morocco).

Being Islamic does not automatically mean that the person represents Islam in itself or has been given the "stamp of approval" that he is completely consistent with the truth of Islam. On the other hand, the fact that Islamic discourse is influenced by different human factors does not necessarily mean that it has no Islamic nature or concerns.

Given that any discourse is inevitably affected by the situation in which it exists, then it is crucial for it to be deeply reviewed from time to time and from one situation to another. The review should be done regarding old situations that have changed and are no longer applicable, new conditions that come into existence from time to time, and mistakes that should be corrected. This review should be a scientific, insightful one. When done in this manner, the review will be the sort of religious renewal which the Prophet (PBUH) mentioned in the *Hadîth*: *"At the end of every hundred years, Allah raises up in this (Muslim) Nation one who will renovate religion for it."* (1)

However, reviews that are arbitrary, unscientific or done under threat and pressure will be just backward steps. They resemble an attempt to use the cause of a problem to solve it! I think that this blessed initiative of the Research and Study Center of the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs in Qatar to issue a publication on "Contemporary Islamic Discourse: A Call for Evaluation and Reconsideration" is a meaningful, scientific review that we need to undertake from time to time.

In this context, this contribution points out some weaknesses and problems of Islamic discourse, its institutions and practitioners. Some of these problems began in the past and still exist today, while others have been created by contemporary conditions. It is worth mentioning that the opinions and remarks highlighted here may not apply to Islamic discourse in general, but they probably are among its most common features.

(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd.

I. Reconsideration of the Approach to Religion

- The Message of Religion

Why religion? Why religious commitment? This is one of the main issues not only in any Islamic discourse, but also in every notion or action related to Islam. In fact, it is probably the mother issue of all Islamic and, more comprehensively, religious issues. When understood and assimilated appropriately, it can secure an effective, well-designed Islamic discourse. When its understanding is defective, however, it will cause innumerable problems for the Islamic discourse and actions, which themselves are a practical form of discourse.

Today, there is a big dispute and serious confusion in relation to this issue, both among Muslims and Islamic activists, and among Muslims and non-Muslims.

Some perceive religion as a mere fulfillment of Allah's rights and the requirements of worshipping Him. In this sense, religious commitment is a debt that we owe Allah. Others believe that religion involves only duties, burdens and restraints which people have to accept and tolerate as a way to get closer to Allah, receive His reward and avoid his punishment. For them, religiosity is a "worldly trial" for an "otherworldly reward". A third group maintains that strong religiousness and true belief are only realized by austerity, self-mortification and asceticism, while facilitation and moderateness are indicators of weakness, or even lack of faith. Yet others may think that religion serves only as a meaningless trial in which we should do whatever we are told to do without asking why!

At the same time, some view religion as a mere emotional belief or nationalistic prejudice. They do not need religion to bother them or discipline their lives and conduct, claiming that they know better concerning what to do. Another group sees that "over-religiousness" is a personal affair and that "devout" people in general are unjustifiably, or fanatically, religious. A large number of academics and politicians consider religion as an ideological and political rival. Moreover, certain parties deal with religion and its advocates as a security problem, thinking that religious commitment is an explosive condition or, at best, an effective tool of incitement and mobilization, and, therefore, it should be kept under police

control. Some Western, as well as Arab, thinkers have a notion that every Muslim is a prospective Islamist, every Islamist is a prospective extremist, and every extremist is a prospective terrorist. To summarize, they view the problem to be based in Islam and being committed to it.

Some philosophizing intellectuals look at religion and religiousness as a superstitious trend that comes into existence in the absence of awareness, critical thinking or a scientific interpretation of matters, and prevails particularly in times of disasters and crises.

I am not concerned here with the attitudes of those who reject the idea of religion, or Islam in particular, and consider it a political or security problem or an obstacle in the way of freedom, development, modernism and democracy. Rather, I will focus on matters connected with Islamic discourse.

Today's Islamic discourse includes three approaches towards this issue:

One group of people looks at the adherence to religion as a worldly problem that we should endure just to help solve our otherworldly problem. In this sense, Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿*... So he who is drawn away from the Fire and admitted to Paradise will indeed be successful...*﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân):185]

Another group considers religion as a solution for the otherworldly problem, as well as for the worldly one, only if the Islamic state or aliphate is reestablished and the Islamic *Sharî'ah* is rightly implemented. Thus, it is a suspended worldly/otherworldly solution. This view is connected with the fifirst idea, though they are apparently different.

Being unclear about Islamic discourse, the third group holds the vision that religion offers perfect guidance and ultimate happiness, and that it represents an immediate solution for this world and a long-term one for the Hereaftfter. From this perspective, the matter does not depend on the establishment of an Islamic state or the observation of the *Shar'î* regulations and rulings. If it happens that the Islamic state is established and the *Sharî'ah* is put into effect, this will be an extra accomplishment.

In any case, religion remains a solution for, not a source of, problems. Substantially, the message and function of religion, or the expected results of following and acting upon religion, can only be determined from the *Shar'î* texts and their contexts. Here are some relevant examples and implications.

1. Religion is Guidance and Enlightenment

The main purpose for which the Messengers were sent and the Heavenly Books were sent down is to guide people to their Lord and inform them of the major truths about their creation, the purpose of their life and the other life after death. This was the underlying reason for revealing the Torah, the Gospel, the Qur'ân and other Heavenly Scriptures sent down by Allah for His servants. The following is some evidence for this from the Glorious Qur'ân:

- ﴿***Indeed, We sent down At-Tawrâh (i.e. the Torah), therein was guidance and light...***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 44]

- ﴿***And in their footsteps, We sent 'Isâ Ibn Maryam (i.e. Jesus, the son of Mary), confirming that which came before him in At-Tawrâh (i.e. the Torah); and We gave him Al-Injîl (i.e. the Gospel), in which was guidance and light, as a confirmation of that which came before him in At-Tawrâh (i.e. the Torah), a guidance and an admonition for the righteous.***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table):46]

- ﴿***Alif, Lâm, Mîm (these letters are one of the miracles of the Qur'ân and none but Allah knows their meaning). Allah! There is no deity except Him, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer (of all that exists). He has sent down upon you (O Muhammad) the Book (i.e. the Qur'ân) with truth, confirming that which came before it. And He sent down At-Tawrâh (i.e. the Torah) and Al-Injîl (i.e. the Gospel). Aforetime, as a guidance for the people (i.e. humankind and the jinn). And He sent down Al-Furqân (i.e. the Criterion of judgment between right and wrong; the Qur'ân)...***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân):1-4]

- ﴿***... Indeed, there has come to you from Allah a light (i.e. Prophet Muhammad; PBUH) and a clear Book (i.e. the Qur'ân). With it, Allah guides those who seek His Pleasure to the ways of peace, brings them out of darkness into the light (i.e. Islam), by His Will, and guides them to a Straight Path (i.e. Islamic monotheism).***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table):15-16]

- ﴿***O humankind! There has come to you good advice (i.e. the Qur'ân) from your Lord, a healing for that (evil) which is in the breasts, a guidance and a mercy for the believers.***﴾ [Yûnus (Jonah): 57]

2. Religion is Purification and Uprightness

Guidance leads to uprightness, and a light that shows one the path. When you know what is right, you should commit yourself to it. This is the second component of the essence of religion. All the Messengers and Heavenly Scriptures were sent to disseminate uprightness, purification, and righteousness. In this sense, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

- ﴿***Indeed, he shall achieve success who purifies himself. And remembers (i.e. glorifies) the Name of his Lord and prays. But you prefer the worldly life; while the Hereafter is better and more lasting. Indeed, this is in the former Scriptures – the Scriptures of Ibrâhîm (i.e. Abraham) and Mûsâ (i.e. Moses).***﴾ [Al-A'lâ (The Most Exalted): 19-14]

-﴿ ***Indeed, he has succeeded who purifies it (i.e. his soul). And indeed, he has failed who instills (corruption into) it.***﴾ [Ash-Shams (The Sun): 9-10]

- ﴿***{"It is He (i.e. Allah) Who sent among the unlettered (i.e. Arabs) a Messenger (i.e. Muhammad; PBUH) from among themselves, reciting to them His Verses, purifying them and teaching them the Book (i.e. the Qur'ân) and wisdom (i.e. the Sunnah) - although they had been before in manifest error.***﴾ [Al-Jumu'ah (Friday): 2]

- ﴿***Indeed, this Qur'ân guides to that which is most just and right...***﴾ [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 9]

- ﴿***They (i.e. the jinn) said, "O our people! Indeed, we have heard a (recited) Book (i.e. the Qur'ân) sent down after Mûsâ (i.e. Moses), confirming that which came before it. It guides to the truth and to a Straight Path (i.e. Islam).***﴾ [Al-Ahqâf (The Sand-Dunes): 30]

- ﴿***Indeed, those who have said, "Our Lord is (only) Allah," and then kept upright, there shall be no fear on them nor shall they grieve.***﴾ [Al-Ahqâf (The Sand-Dunes): 13]

-﴿ ***Say (O Muhammad), "I am only a human being like you. It has been revealed to me that your God is but one God (i.e. Allah). So, keep straight to Him (i.e. worship Him Alone) and ask Him for forgiveness...***﴾ [Fussilat (The Expounded): 6]

- ﴿***Say (O Muhammad), "It has been revealed to me that a group of the jinn listened (to the Qur'ân) and said, 'Indeed, we have heard an amazing Qur'ân (i.e. recitation)! It guides to the Right Path, and we have***

believed in it. And we shall never associate (in worship) with our Lord anyone. And (it teaches) that He, Exalted bethe Majesty of our Lord, has taken neither a wife nor a son (i.e. offspring). And that the foolish among us (i.e. Satan) has been saying about Allah an excessive falsehood. And indeed, we thought that humankind and the jinn would never utter lies about Allah. And indeed, there were men among humankind who sought refuge in males among the jinn, but they (i.e. the jinn) increased them (i.e. humankind) in burden (i.e. sins). And they thought, as you used to think, that Allah would never send anyone (as a Messenger to humankind and the jinn). And we have sought (to reach) the heaven but found it filled with stern guards and burning flames. And indeed, we used to sit therein in positions to hear, but whoever listens now will find a burning flame lying in wait for him. And indeed, we do not know (therefore) whether evil is intended for those on earth or whether their Lord intends for them a Right Guidance. And among us are some that are righteous, and among us are (others) that are not so; we are groups having different ways (i.e. religious sects). And we have become certain that we will never cause Allah to fail (i.e. we cannot escape His plan) upon earth, nor can we escape (from) Him by fleeing. And indeed, when we heard the guidance (i.e. the Qur'ân), we believed in it. And whoever believes in his Lord shall not fear deprivation or burden. And among us are some that are Muslims (in submission to Allah), and among us are some that are unjust (i.e. disbelievers). And whoever has embraced Islam has sought the Right Guidance...' ﴾ [Al-Jinn (The Jinn): 1-14]

- ﴿***And when My servants ask you (O Muhammad) about Me, (tell them that) I am indeed near (to them by My Knowledge). I respond to the invocations of the supplicant when he calls upon Me (without any mediator or intercessor). So let them respond to Me (with obedience) and believe in Me, so that they may be rightly guided.***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 186]

3. Religion is Mercy, Benevolence and Happiness

Allah, Glory be to Him, is in no need of His servants and creatures. He has no need of their faith, worship and deeds; He neither benefits from their obedience to Him nor is He harmed by their sins. By His religion and *Sharî'ah*, Allah wants people to be more virtuous, prosperous and happy. He does not want them to feel any sufferings or hardships. This is obvious in numerous Qur'anic Verses, including:

- ﴿*And We have not sent you (O Muhammad) except as a mercy for the worlds.*﴾ [Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets): 107]

- ﴿*Verily, there has come unto you a Messenger (i.e. Muhammad; PBUH) from amongst yourselves (i.e. whom you know well). Grievous to him is what you suffer. (He is) anxious over you (i.e. your guidance), and to the believers he is kind and merciful. But if they turn away (O Muhammad), say, "Sufficient for me is Allah; there is no deity except Him. On Him I have relied, and He is the Lord of the Mighty (Divine) Throne.*﴾ [At-Tawbah (Repentance):128-129]

- ﴿*Tâ-Hâ (these letters are one of the miracles of the Qur'ân and none but Allah knows their meaning). We have not sent down to you (O Muhammad) the Qur'ân to cause you distress.*﴾ [Tâ-Hâ:1-2]

- ﴿*... Then whoever follows My Guidance shall neither go astray (in the world) nor suffer (in the Hereafter). And whoever turns away from My Remembrance (i.e. worship and obedience) shall have a very unpleasant life (in the world)...*﴾ [Tâ-Hâ:123-124]

- ﴿*Those who follow the Messenger, the unlettered Prophet (i.e. Muhammad; PBUH), whom they find written (i.e. mentioned) in what they have of At-Tawrâh (i.e. the Torah) and Al-Injîl (i.e. the Gospel), (and who) commands them to (follow and do) what is right, forbids them what is wrong, makes lawful for them the good things, prohibits for them the evil things, and releases them from their burden (i.e. the religious obligations imposed on the Children of Israel) and the shackles which were upon them (i.e. the Heavenly Penalties laid against the Children of Israel)...*﴾ [Al-A'râf (The Battlements):157]

- ﴿*Indeed, We have sent Our Messengers with clear proofs, and sent down with them the Scripture and the Balance (i.e. justice) that the people may maintain (their affairs) in justice...*﴾ [Al-Hadîd (Iron):25]

Accordingly, enjoying the harvest of adherence to Islam is not something delayed exclusively until the Hereafter; there is also an immediate reward that begins once you embrace Islam and increases by doing more and better deeds. Guidance, enlightenment, healing of souls, wisdom, purification, mercy, doing good and avoiding evil, all are direct fruits which can be attained in the real world, both on the individual and group levels, regardless of whether or not an Islamic Caliphate is present.

The Islamic discourse, whether written, oral or practical, should focus on these positive consequences and indicate that they can be enjoyed right now. If this is not achieved, the fault is either in the discourse itself or in the way it is received.

The Islamic discourse today, and even formerly, acts, for the most part, to persuade religious people that they should suffer and endure hardships in this world to get happiness in the Hereafter. However, the Islamic *Sharî'ah* tells us to "feel happy in this world to feel happier in the Hereafter". In this sense, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

- ﴿... ***O Our Lord! Give us in this world (that which is) good and in the Hereafter (that which is) good, and protect us from the torment of the Fire.*** ﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 201]

He also says:

- ﴿***Whoever does righteous (deeds), whether male or female, while he is a believer, We will surely cause him to live a good life (in this world). And We will surely give them their reward (in the Hereafter) according to the best of what they used to do.*** ﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees): 97]

Furthermore, He says:

- ﴿***And whoever is blind in this (life; i.e. does not obey Allah's Ordinances) will be blind in the Hereafter and more astray from the (Right) Path.*** ﴾ [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 72]

By the same token, Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated a *Sahîh* (i.e. authentic) *Hadîth* in which the Prophet (PBUH) said: "*Whoever possesses the (following) three qualities will taste the sweetness of faith: (i) That Allah and His Messenger is dearer to him than anything else; (ii) that he loves a person only for Allah's Sake; and (iii) that he hates to revert to disbelief as one hates to be thrown into the Hellfire.*"[1]

Can our Islamic discourse enable its audience to perceive and enjoy the good things of this world, lead a good life and feel the spirituality and sweetness of faith? Or are these mere worldly affairs that have no importance in Islam and its discourse?

The Islamic discourse should not necessarily enrich the poor, heal the ill and chasten the corrupt, nor is it expected to rid the world of injustice,

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, the Chapter on *Al-Îmân* (Faith), the Section of *Halâwat Al-Îmân* (Sweetness of Faith).

tyranny, evil and pain. If its message is well-understood, the Islamic discourse will be able to make people find happiness and peace of mind in their faith and worship, become highly civilized in their manners and behavior, achieve success by keeping upright, and always feel satisfied despite the difficulties of life. The Islamic discourse can build and organize societies which are based on peace, love, mercy, solidarity, altruism, benevolence, righteousness, and happiness both in this world and in the Hereafter.

When the Islamic discourse moves in this direction; when it achieves these aspects; and when its advocates and audience become happier within themselves, more rightly guided in their beliefs, more purified in their souls, more elevated in their behavior, and more helpful for their society, then it can be said that such a discourse follows the Ordinances and Teachings of Allah and effectively performs its basic function.

Religion is a blessing, not wrath; guidance, not overburden; happiness, not suffering; advantage, not disadvantage; facilitation, not hardship; and a mercy, not severity.

- Religious Obligations between Difficulties and Desires:

Some literalists who love austerity focus on certain *Shar'î* concepts and take their superficial meanings as the holistic principles that govern their perception and the practical guidelines of religion which they follow. This can be exemplified by the following *Hadîth*: *"The Paradise is surrounded by hardships and the Hellfire is surrounded by temptations."*[1]

Upon such a text, as well as many others, a lot of Muslim preachers and *Muftis* rely for much of their thought. They forbid and warn against almost everything that may be pleasant or pleasurable, on the grounds that these things are the desires and temptations which drive to the Hellfire. Likewise, they praise and enjoin everything that may be unpleasant or burdensome, on the basis that they are the hardships which pave the way to Paradise.

In reality, the temptations mentioned in the *Hadîth* are only such things which are expressly prohibited by Allah. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

- ***﴿Say (O Muhammad), "Come, I will recite what your Lord has prohibited you from...﴾*** [Al-An'âm (Cattle):151]

(1) *Sahîh* (Authentic *Hadîth* Book) of Muslim, the Chapter on *"Al-Jannah Wa Sifat Na'îmuhâ Wa Ahluhâ"* (Paradise and Description of Its Pleasures and Inhabitants).

He also says:

- ﴾*... **While He (i.e. Allah) has explained to you in detail what He has forbidden to you...***﴿ [Al-An'âm (Cattle):119]

These temptations are limited in number. When Allah, Glory be to Him, forbids certain desired objects in certain cases, this is because they result in evil and corruption. Furthermore, He only prohibits them after there are many good and permissible substitutes.

In general, things that lead to the Hellfire in the Hereafter are such things that destroy one's life in this world. It is obvious today how these malicious items cause physical diseases, psychological problems, deterioration of production and development, rampancy of consumerism and dependency, family and social disintegration, delinquency and crime, etc. This sense can be found in the Noble Qur'anic Verse: ﴾***But there came after them successors (i.e. later generations) who neglected As-Salâh (i.e. Prayer) and pursued desires (and lusts); so they are going to meet evil (i.e. they will be thrown into the torment of Hellfire.***﴿ [Maryam (Mary): 59]

The previous verse used the word "pursue" to indicate compliance and indulgence. The point is to call for rationality, moderation and ennoblement, not to absolutely condemn human desires or prohibit responding to them.

Allah, Exalted be He, says:

- ﴾***Beautified for people is the love of things they covet; women, children, heaped-up amounts of gold and silver (i.e. wealth), beautifully branded horses, cattle and tilled land...***﴿ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân):14]

Thus, it is Allah Who has created these desires, made them pleasurable for us and permitted us to satisfy them. In fact, they are not prohibited in themselves. Condemnation only goes to a special, few and well-stated cases, such as indulgence and unlawful practices. As the saying goes, "you can have too much of a good thing".

As for the "commendable" hardships surrounding Paradise, they are the matters that require you to give up your comfort and endure some taxing action. This includes the efforts that people make to perform their job and meet their needs: It is the difficulties which a learner finds in his study, a researcher finds in his experiments, an artist finds in his creative production, an athlete finds in his training and performances, etc. All these examples, and others, involve hard work which people would like to be exempted from having to do. This is a fact of life.

Likewise, people may find the same difficulties when observing the religious teachings; ritual purification, prayer, fast, *Zakâh*, *Hajj* (i.e. Pilgrimage), *Jihâd* (i.e. fighting in Allah's Cause), being patient when enraged, etc.

When you do your best to bear these difficulties and assume your dailylife responsibilities in view of the long-term rewards, these difficulties will become easier to face and less exacting. With more interest and willpower, you may even attain true pleasure with these difficulties. For example, while many people would feel that performing prayer is a little bit burdensome, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said: "*Prayer was made the comfort of (my) eye for me.*"[1]

It is worth noting that these hardships and troubles, which should be accepted in pursuance of reward in this world and in the Hereafter, are not commendable in themselves, but due to their subsequent results and benefits they are commendable. So, Imâm Ash-Shâtibî maintained that no one should seek hardships. He wrote, "When the intention of the legally accountable person is to cause trouble, then he will not be observing the purpose of the Lawgiver (i.e. Allah, Exalted be He), whose legislations are never intended for the mere endurance of hardship. Given that any action not in compliance with the purpose of the Lawgiver is null and void, seeking hardship is consequently forbidden. Doing something forbidden yields no Divine reward, and it can even involve sin if it is categorically forbidden. Accordingly, seeking rewards by incurring hardships contains a lot of contradictions and is very inconsistent."[2] He added: "... for Allah has not made self-torture a way to get closer to Him nor to seek His reward."[3]

The Ever-Wise Lawgiver does not intend to distress people or prevent them from satisfying their desires (since it is Him Who has created such desires in people and made them permissible). Generally and in particular, He wants to refine their drives and guide them to their utmost well-being.

If this is so, it will be inexpedient to follow the sort of public discourse which inclines to austerity and restraint, ignoring the permissible and effortless matters in the *Shar'î*, and repressing the natural, human needs on the grounds of religiousness and asceticism.

(1) *Sunan* of An-Nasâ'î, No. 3879.

(2) *Al-Muwâfaqât* (Agreements), with explanation by Sheikh 'Abdullah Drâz, 2nd edition, 1395 A.H., 1975.

(3) Ibid.

For example, many people take marriage as a way to preserve chastity or get closer to Allah, which is actually right. But they may go too far and consider it as being intended just for reproduction, not for the accompanying pleasure. Some even show disrespect for such sensual and emotional pleasures (though they have been created and permitted for all people by their Lord) considering them to be something "shameful".

Another example: At a wedding, I heard a religious man blaming the hosts for assigning a long time for Islamic chants and amusement while allotting just a few minutes for some recitation of the Glorious Qur'ân and a short sermon! I said to him, "In my opinion, even if a recitation or sermon is not given at all, they are not to blame."

Surely, the Qur'ân can be recited on specific occasions, and so can sermons. They should not necessarily be performed on other occasions. For a wedding, however, it is the specific occasion for us to partake in some Islamic chants, entertainment and banqueting.

This does not mean that I do not agree with the recitation of the Qur'ân and sermons at weddings. The fact is I disagree with such austere trends which forbid things which are permitted by Allah and exaggerate some religious obligations or apply them to irrelevant cases.

Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

- ﴿***... So, recite as much as may be easy (for you) of the Qur'ân...***﴾

[Al-Muzzammil (The Enwrapped): 20]

Then, He confirms:

- ﴿***... So, recite as much as may be easy (for you) of it...***﴾

[Al-Muzzammil (The Enwrapped): 20]

Arousing much interest in the recitation of and meditation on the Glorious Qur'ân is a considerable objective, but it does not justify overburdening people with exaggerated or incorrect judgments.

II. Reconsideration of Approach to Reality

The Islamic discourse deals with reality as a whole, whether immediate or not. In fact, we are increasingly becoming "in touch" with everything in our lives.

The realistic Islamic discourse involves certain concepts of reality, diagnosis of its conditions, classifications and descriptions of its elements, and general judgments on it.

This reality-focused Islamic discourse needs to be heavily reviewed and refined. Many efforts and writings today are emphasizing the necessity to rationalize the Islamic discourse with this particular aspect which deals with serious judgments and reactions. The points that need to be rationalized include:

-Prevalence of a Cynical, Antagonistic Mentality

It is true that our situation, on the Islamic and universal levels, is not "rosy" or optimistic. Yet, the current world is full of opportunities and unprecedented potential for success.

However, our Islamic discourse focuses solely on negative aspects or adversities. It is not supposed to ignore these problems, but it should look holistically at the "large (overall) picture", taking into account both the bright and dark sides of situations. Any Islamic discourse should keep to fairness and objectivity, which are the basic features of Islam.

Allah, Exalted be He, says:

- ﴿***O you who have believed! Stand out firmly for Allah, as just witnesses, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do.***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 8]

He also says:

- ﴿***... And whenever you give your word (i.e. testify), be just, even if (it concerns) a near relative. And fulfill the Covenant of Allah. This (is what) He has instructed you (to do), that you may remember.***﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 152]

Whether with Muslims or non-Muslims; friends or foes; collaborators or opponents; neighbors or non-neighbors; in any case and with everyone,

we should pursue and acknowledge the truth. When something is good, we should say it is good, even if we hate it.

In another citation, the Glorious Qur'ân appreciates the wisdom and truthfulness of a woman although she was a disbeliever and governed a disbelieving people. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

- ﴿***She said, "O chiefs! Here has been delivered to me a noble letter. Indeed, it is from Sulaymân (i.e. Solomon), and indeed, it is (i.e. reads): 'In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful: Do not be haughty with me but come to me as Muslims (i.e. in submission).' " She said, "O chiefs! Advise me on my affair. I do not decide a matter until you are present with me (and give me your opinion)." They said, "We have strength and great military might. (But) the command is yours, so see what you will command." She said, "Indeed, kings, when they enter a village (i.e. country), ruin it and render the most honorable amongst its people humiliated. And thus they certainly do.***﴾ [An-Naml (The Ants): 29-34]

The great scholar Al-Qurtubî explained, "She used gentleness with her retinue, consulted them about what to do, and told them that she used to do this in every decision she took. The Qur'ân reported her as saying: ﴿***... I do not decide a matter until you are present with me (and give me your opinion).***﴾ [An-Naml (The Ants): 32]

Just as she used to consult them on her ordinary decisions, it was natural to seek their advice on such a serious matter. The advisors reassured her that they had irresistible power and then left the final say to her as the highest authority. The whole conversation was democratic and objective.

The great scholar Muhammad Al-Amîn Ash-Shanqîtî wrote, "Although she and her people had worshipped the sun instead of Allah, when the Queen of Saba' (i.e. Sheba) mentioned something right, Allah acknowledged it. The Qur'ân reported her as saying:

- ﴿ ***Indeed, kings, when they enter a village (i.e. country), ruin it and render the most honorable amongst its people humiliated ...*** ﴾ [An-Naml (The Ants): 34]

Then, Allah, Glory be to Him, confirmed it by saying:

﴿***... And thus they certainly do.*** ﴾ [An-Naml (The Ants): 34]

Today's Islamic discourse looks for the most part at the conditions of Muslims, taking them to be as worse than ever before, believing that their weaknesses and adverse circumstances are more deteriorating than at any

other time in the past, and that their nonobservance of Islam is at an unprecedented degree. In addition, the international system with its multiple aspects and approaches to Muslims is seen more gloomily and unfavorably.

Undoubtedly, many of the world conditions which cater for this perception are real and cannot be ignored or belittled. Nevertheless, having this too "black" image of the world around us, we fail to realize two important elements which should not be omitted from this image.

First, all the weakness, oppression and adversities from which we suffer are not something new; they were more or less found in the past centuries of our nation.

The Tatars invaded large parts of the Islamic world and committed horrible massacres against its inhabitants, to the extent that Muslims thought that it was a sign of the approach of the Doomsday. The Crusaders also occupied Jerusalem for about one century. Andalusia was seized by the enemies, partly because of the weakness of the Muslims, and its Muslim inhabitants were exposed to incredible torture as well as physical and religious extermination.

If certain parts of the Islamic world are still under occupation, most of the Islamic countries suffered from occupation during the first half of the 20th century. If contemporary religious people and Islamic scholars are experiencing restraint and oppression, this may seem very minor when compared to what their counterparts experienced in ancient times.

People today are by no means worse than the ancient people who denied and killed their Prophets while the Heavenly Miracles and Scriptures sent down with them were evident. The best reference on this is the Glorious Qur'ân, which elaborates on the stories of the Prophets with their obstinate and blind people, starting from Prophet Noah to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

For example, while the people of Noah were closer to the beginning of the creation and consequently were supposed to be more spiritual, we find that their disbelief and tyranny were beyond our perception. Day and night, using every possible way, their Prophet Noah kept calling them to believe in their Lord so that He may forgive them their sins. After approximately ten centuries of striving, he finally said (as reported in the Glorious Qur'ân):

﴿And indeed, every time I invited them that You may forgive them, they thrust their fingers into their ears, covered themselves up with their garments, persisted (in their refusal), and were arrogant with (great) haughtiness.﴾ [Nûh (Noah): 7]

Then, he (Noah) said:

﴿... ***"My Lord! Do not leave upon the earth from among the disbelievers (even) one inhabitant. Indeed, if You leave them, they will mislead Your servants and will not beget except (every) wicked one and (confirmed) disbeliever.*** ﴾ [Nûh (Noah): 26-27]

He was followed only by a few people, among whom his only wife and his beloved son were not included! History contains many stories and examples of this sort, but it is not our intention here to go into detail over them. However, it is certain that the past was full of perversity, darkness, atrocities and injustice.

It can be described as Allah, Glory be to Him, mentions in the Qur'anic Verse: ﴿... ***(the state of a disbeliever) is like (layers of) darkness within an unfathomable sea which is overwhelmed by waves, upon which are waves, over which are clouds. These are (layers of) darkness, topping one other; if (one) stretches out his hand (therein), he can hardly see it...*** ﴾ [An-Nûr (The Light): 40]

The point is that our time, in general, is no worse or more perverted than the ancient times.

The second point is that our time has advantages and opportunities which were never available in the past. To be fair, we should recognize such positive elements, even if they are surrounded by unfavorable conditions or belong to our enemies.

When the status of Muslims today is compared to their status one or two centuries ago, we will undoubtedly find many bad and, sometimes disastrous, changes. But we will also find many positive developments, which may even surpass the negative ones.

The contemporary Islamic discourse focuses mostly on the negative aspects. We frequently hear about such topics as the collapse of the Islamic Caliphate, imperial expansion, marginalization of the Islamic *Sharî'ah* in favor of imported legislations, corruption and dependence of the existing governments, moral and social dissolution, prevalence of wrongdoing, oppression of the reformers and Islamic figures, etc.

On the other hand, an interesting improvement can be observed in the general status of Islam, with relative reforms in certain aspects. The most prominent change is the increasing religiousness and commitment to Islam at the levels of the general public, youths and graduates, and even the Muslim communities in Europe and the Americas. The last 100 years, particularly

the last four decades, can be considered as the period of a real Islamic revival, both in beliefs and practices.

When today's performance of the pillars of Islam (prayer, fast, *Zakâh*, *Hajj*, etc.); recitation of the Qur'ân; religious knowledge and education; and Islamic media programmes, scholarly efforts and cultural renewal are compared to those of decades ago, it becomes clear that they are far better than before. At the same time, we admit that some forms of corruption, deviation as well as new challenges have appeared or increased.

As for the international level, especially in terms of its relationship with Islam, it also has some advantages that should be recognized and made use of.

One such important, positive aspect is the great advancement in terms of freedom, particularly freedom of thought, expression, information, and group and institutional work. Of course, there should be some degree of limitation of this freedom, depending on the country, situation or field which it concerns. Yet, in general, modern freedom is more enforced and protected than that of the ancient societies.

This freedom is supported by a moral and cultural base (i.e. the human rights culture with its far-reaching conventions and institutions) as well as a political and legal base (i.e. the notion of democracy with its principles and systems). Humankind has benefited from these three elements and has improved many of its political, social, religious and cultural conditions.

Likewise, Muslims and the Islamic movements managed to gain some advantages, but under stronger limitations and pressures.

These elements can be more beneficial for Muslims if taken seriously and effectively, away from falsification and misuse. They can even be more useful and effective when Muslims understand better that these are part of the essence of Islam and its *Sharî'ah*.

- Problems of Confusion and Generalization

The Islamic discourse has many dissenters and opponents, some of whom are essentially real enemies of Muslims. When referring to these enemies, the Islamic discourse often uses a generalized language that makes no differentiation, exception or prioritization. It talks about the Jews, Christians, Crusaders, Orientalists, Westerners, Americans, secularists, communists, etc., giving them all the same judgments and the same condemnation, and deeming them all as enemies or conspirators. This sort of confusion is too dangerous. First, it is not an honest description of the facts, nor does it deal with all people on a fair and detached basis, regardless of their religious or cultural background. In addition, generalization is misleading and

makes one unable to perceive things as they really are. Any subsequent attitude and behavior will likely bring about more dissenters and opponents.

Historically, our problems were mostly with the People of the Scriptures (the Jews and Christians). In different parts, the Glorious Qur'ân deals elaborately with the People of the Scriptures and the malicious thoughts and distortions that occurred to their religious beliefs and behavior. At the same time, Allah, Exalted be He, states firmly:

﴿***They are not (all) the same; among the People of the Scripture is a community standing (in obedience), reciting the Verses of Allah during periods of the night and prostrating themselves (in prayer). They believe in Allah and the Last Day; they enjoin what is good and forbid what is evil; and they hasten in (doing) good deeds. And those are among the righteous. And whatever good they do will never be rejected, for Allah knows best (those who are) the righteous.***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân):113-115]

Additionally, while it criticizes their evils and wrongdoings, it is careful not to generalize about them as a whole. Examples are numerous, including:

- ﴿***A party of the People of the Scripture wish they could mislead you...***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 69]

- ﴿***And a party of the People of the Scripture say (to each other), "Believe in that which was revealed to the believers (i.e. Muslims) at the beginning of the day and disbelieve (in it) at its end, so that they may return (i.e. abandon their religion).***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 72]

- ﴿***And among the People of the Scripture is he who, if you entrust him with a great amount (of wealth), will readily pay it back to you. And among them is he who, if you entrust him with a (single) silver coin, will not pay it back to you unless you are constantly standing over him (i.e. keep demanding for it)...***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân):75]

- ﴿***And indeed, among them is a party who distort the Scripture with their tongues...***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân):78]

- ﴿ ***O you who have believed! If you obey a party of those who were given the Scripture, they would turn you back, after your belief, (into being) disbelievers.***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân):100]

- ﴿***You see many of them taking as allies those who disbelieved (in Allah)...***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table):80]

- ﴿*You will surely find the most intense of the people in animosity toward the believers (to be) the Jews and those who associated (others with Allah in worship); and you will surely find the nearest of them in affection to the believers (to be) those who say, "We are Christians." That is because among them are priests and monks and (because) they are not arrogant. And when they listen to what has been sent down to the Messenger (i.e. Muhammad; PBUH), you see their eyes overflowing with tears because of what they have recognized of the truth. They say, "Our Lord! We have believed, so write us down among the witnesses.*﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table):82-83]

- ﴿ *"And indeed, among the People of the Scripture are those who believe in Allah and in that which has been revealed to you and in that which was revealed to them, (being) humbly submissive to Allah. They do not exchange the Verses of Allah for a little price. These will have their reward with their Lord. Indeed, Allah is Swift in reckoning.*﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân):199]

In pursuance of this approach, our Islamic discourse has to believe that all the Jews are not the same, all the Christians are not the same, all Westerners are not the same, all Americans are not the same, all secularists are not the same, all our rulers and parties are not the same, and even all corrupt people are not the same. Within all of these groups, there are the good and the evil, the fair and the malevolent! They may share some beliefs, characteristics and behavior, while they differ in others.

Thus, all our judgments, attitudes and relationships should be based on differentiation and classification, not on confusion and generalization.

This complies with our religion and is the best for ourselves as well as for others. In reality, the saying, "*Kufr* (i.e. disbelief) is one creed" cannot and should not be generalized, or substantially used. The perfect principle here is the Qur'anic Verse:

﴿*They are not (all) the same...*﴾[Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 113]

Nothing has one single case or degree. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿*"They are (in varying) degrees in the sight of Allah, and Allah is All-Seer of what they do.*﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 163]

In this sense, the Islamic literature includes titles such as "*Al-Milal Wâ An-Nihal*" (Creeds and Beliefs) by Ash-Shahrastânî, and "*Al-Fasl Fî Al-Milal Wâ Al-Ahwâ' Wâ An-Nihal*" (The Criterion about Creeds, Inclinations and Beliefs) by Ibn Hazm. Making indefinite generalizations about all people reflects a shallow mentality, lack of logic or dishonest intentions.

Contemporary Islamic Discourse Approach and Mechanisms

Dr. Halîmah Bû Krûshah [*]

Identifying the current nature of Islamic discourse should not stop at just explaining its weaknesses and shortcomings. Rather, it should go further in an attempt to identify the reasons behind them, and then suggest appropriate solutions. This would undoubtedly help formulate practical and effective ideas to promote Islamic discourse and overcome its subjective and methodological problems.

Allah, Exalted be He, created man and favored him over all the other creatures. Allah says:

﴿***And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea and provided for them over much of what we have created, with [definite] preference.***﴾ [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 70]

Allah, the Almighty, has favored man over all other creatures with the gift of eloquence. In this respect, He says:

﴿***The Most Merciful taught the Qur'ân, created man, [and] taught him eloquence.***﴾ [Ar-Rahmân (The All-Merciful): 1-4]

This trait was also associated with those whom Allah selected, from among the people, to be His Prophets and Messengers. Allah distinguished them with full knowledge of the language of their people. Allah, Exalted

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(*) Algerian Academic Researcher.

be He, says: ﴿***And We did not send any messenger except [speaking] in the language of his people to make [the Message] clear for them...***﴾ [Ibrâhîm (Abraham): 4]

Moreover, Allah gave them the ability to address their people and interact well with them. The Almighty praised their eloquence, their ability to win disputes using sound argument and suchlike traits. In the Qur'ân, Prophet Nûh (Noah; PBUH) said: ﴿***I am only a clear Warner.***﴾ [Ash-Shu'arâ' (The Poets: 115)]

Allah says about His Prophet Abraham (PBUH) after his argument with his people: ﴿***And that was our [conclusive] argument which We gave Abraham against his people. We raise by degrees whom we will. Indeed, your Lord is Wise and Knowing.***﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 83]

Allah also says about His Prophet David (PBUH): ﴿***And We strengthened his kingdom and gave him wisdom and discernment in speech.***﴾ [Sâd: 20]

The Almighty also describes His Seal of Prophethood, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as being eloquent: ﴿***And say "Indeed, I am a clear Warner.***﴾ [Al-Hijr (Thamûd's Habitation): 89]

Moreover, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) has been described as possessing the ability of speaking precisely and comprehensively. The Noble Qur'ân demonstrates the mission of all messengers collectively by saying: ﴿***...So is there anything upon the messengers except [the duty of] clear notification?***﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees): 35]

All these references confirm the fact that achieving victory for the truth of Islam and its call lies –after ensuring full sincerity to Allah– in perfecting eloquence. The first and most important form of this is skillfulness in addressing the "other" (non-Muslim) and succeeding in delivering discourse to him in a way that attracts all his senses and feelings; a way that affects his heart as well as his mind.

From this fundamental perspective, it has become necessary to review our "Islamic discourse" in order to identify its strong points so as to develop and increase them, and identify any points of weakness so as to correct and strengthen them. This requires those responsible for establishing the bases of Islamic discourse, those responsible for conveying it, and even those in charge of receiving it and putting it into action, to contribute to rectifying and strengthening it. This research is just a modest attempt to remind the reader of the fundamentals of Islamic discourse in the hope that this can help raise the value of Islamic discourse and make it a part of the equation of change. Indeed, this is not at all difficult for Allah.

The Elements of Islamic Discourse

Undoubtedly, any discourse that seeks to influence reality should be regulated with certain rules that absorb its constituting elements and guarantee that it will achieve its goals. The elements constituting Islamic discourse are: the concept, content, methodology and techniques.

Thus, in order to ensure that Islamic discourse is up to the challenge, whether this challenge is internal or external, regional or international, it should be aware of its reality and its role. It should also conform to its content, abide by its rules and make use of its techniques so that it will be able to achieve its goals.

A discussion on promoting the standard of Islamic discourse to render it equal to the challenge starts by defining its basics and outlining its features and steps. This requires us to briefly define the concept and content of the discourse, and focus on its approach and techniques in more detail.

First Element: Concept of Islamic Discourse:

In *"Lisân Al-'Arab"* (Arabic Tongue), Ibn Manzûr defined the Arabic word *"khitâb or mukhâtabah"* (i.e., discourse) as "reviewing speech".

The derivatives of the word *"khataba"* (discoursed) are found eleven times in the Qur'ân. [1] The word *"khitâb"* (speech/discourse) is mentioned three times. For example, Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***...So he said, 'entrust her to me,' and he overpowered me in discourse.***﴾ [Sâd: 23]

Moreover, Allah says: ﴿***And We strengthened his kingdom and gave him wisdom and discernment in discourse (when speaking).***﴾ [Sâd: 20]

This indicates how important discourse is and that it should be crowned with wisdom. It is mentioned in another verse of the Qur'ân in which Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***[From] the Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever is between them, the Most Merciful. They possess not from Him [any authority to carry out] discourse.***﴾ [An-Naba' (The Tiding): 37]

This shows that the discourse of the Almighty can annul any other discourse or speech.

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(1) Refer to Muhammad Fû'âd 'Abdul-Baqî's, *"Al-Mu'jam Al-Mufahras Li Alfâz Al-Qur'ân Al-Karîm"* (The Indexed Lexicon of the Terms of the Noble Qur'ân), p.298.

The word *"khitâb"* (discourse) is used juristically to define the legal rulings issued either directly from Allah through the Qur'ân or from the Prophet (PBUH) through the *Sunnah* (i.e., Prophetic traditions). The juristic definition of a legal ruling is: "It is the discourse of Allah relating to the acts of those who are accountable concerning obligations, choices or conventions."

Jurists' Definition of Discourse

Jurists define the discourse used in *Shar'î* principles as "The conventional term that is meant to make matters comprehensible for those ready to understand them."(1)

They have divided it into explicit, implicit, implied and articulated discourse. They have also mentioned other kinds of discourse and tackled the guidelines, essence and harmony of discourse. However, this is not our main topic here.

Modernists' Definition of Discourse

The contemporary scholars have tackled discourse from different angles based on their fields of specialization: philosophical, literary, linguistic, psychological, political, intellectual, media and *Da'wah*-oriented. We shall focus here on the meaning that serves to resolve the problem raised in this research.

Tâhâ `Abdur-Rahmân presented a comprehensive definition for *"khitâb"* in which he combined the definition of the early as well as the contemporary scholars. He stated, "The uttered words – discourse – that can be regarded as speech are those that succeed in meeting the necessary requirements of communication that should be found in what is called 'discourse'. That is, discourse is any uttered speech directed to others, aiming at conveying a specific idea to them."(2) This is a detailed explanation of the jurists' definition.

According to this comprehensive meaning of discourse, Islamic discourse is not the sole responsibility of an individual or a specific group of individuals.

Rather, it is the responsibility of every Muslim, whatever his or her field may be: jurists, those in the media, economists, politicians, scientists, etc.

(1) Al-âmidî, *"Al-Ihkâm fi Usûl Al-Ahkâm"* (The Perfection of the Rulings of the *Sharî'ah*) (Beirut: Dar Al-Kutub Al-`Ilmiyyah, 1980), vol. 1, p. 136.

(2) Tâhâ `Abdur-Rahmân, *"Al-Lisân Wal-Mîzân"* (The Tongue and Balance), Casablanca, the Arabian Cultural Center's edition, 1998) p. 215.

Discourse, in general, is the tool through which people can communicate with each other. It is a fundamental factor in the formation of their mental, intellectual and psychological make-up. In addition, it is the basic tool that develops convictions and creates attitudes and movements on the individual and group level. Discourse is the most important weapon in the current struggle to control people's minds and attitudes. Moreover, it is an important tool used in promoting cultural, intellectual and political projects, as well as other projects.

However, Islamic discourse is the tool used to express the Islamic perspective of life, universe and mankind. It is the main factor in the formation of a Muslim's mind, and it is one of the most important sources allowing non- Muslims to learn about Islam and Muslims. It also reflects a community's degree of civilization and its ability to deal with the challenges of contemporary life, or its inability to cope with changes and so remain in a state of standstill.

Despite the importance of Islamic discourse in the process of change and reform, it would be correct to admit that our discourse has been one of the reasons behind the distortion of our concepts and practices rather than being a way to promote them. This strongly suggests that the problem of the Muslim nation is primarily a problem of discourse, and the only way to reform and boost the role of the Muslim mind is to reform the prevailing Islamic discourse.

Second Element: Content of Islamic Discourse:

This research will not delve deeply into the content of Islamic discourse. It will consider any discourse which has an Islamic topic as an Islamic discourse, whether in the field of creed, *Fiqh*, thought, art, media, politics, economics, etc, and whether it is from Allah, Exalted be He, His Prophet (PBUH) or from the Muslim nation who embrace this religion. It could also be a discourse about our *Shar'î* duties or man-made matters, or any other kind of discourse. The discourse we are concerned with in this research is that which tackles "a comprehensive reform of society". [1]

(1) Ma'rûf Ad-Dawâlîbî, "*Introduction to Fundamentals of Fiqh*", p. 413.

Third Element: Methodology of Islamic Discourse:

Tackling the methodology of Islamic discourse requires us to first define the term "methodology" and then illustrate its importance to the discourse. Methodology is "a set of procedures carried out in a certain order to achieve a certain aim". (1)

Here, the methodology represents an intellectual necessity for Islamic discourse, as it collects, organizes and coordinates energies to serve specific goals in an accurate, time and effort-saving way. In the absence of a methodology, Islamic discourse would become a sort of intellectual chaos causing a waste of effort and energy. As a result, the Islamic call would lose its effect, value and creativity.

The absence of methodology not only causes disorder in the performance of the discourse, but its deficiency also distorts the content of Islamic discourse and intensifies its predicaments.

In this context, it is important to stress that the success of discourse in forming the Muslim's mind and improving the awareness and knowledge of the "other" about Islam requires reaching an agreement on the principles of its methodology. These principles should guarantee the effectiveness of the discourse and strengthen its essential functions: information, clarification, conviction and protection against chaos and distortion.

Methodological Principles of Islamic Discourse:

The methodological principles of Islamic discourse will be illustrated and discussed by considering the following:

Firstly: Theorization and Revelation:

Theorization is one of the most important methodological tools employed by Islamic discourse to define Islamic concepts and alternatives, and defend them against their opposing theories, both locally and internationally.

Islamic discourse uses theorization to clarify the broad principles of the alternatives it proposes, the fundamental standards of comprehending them, the general rules of practicing them, etc.

(1) 'Abdul-Mun'im Al-Hifni, "Encyclopedia of Philosophy", 1st Edition, (Beirut: Ibn Zaydûn Publishing House, Madbûli Library, Cairo.) p. 471 .

Although we acknowledge the importance of theorization for any discourse – whatever its philosophy may be – the problem in Islamic discourse is that the prominence of theorization may be associated with a clear disregard of the element of revelation (with its practical solution to problems in life).

It is apparent that Islamic discourse does not exert the necessary, expected effort to form applicable Islamic alternatives. This should be done by identifying the current status of the Muslim nation and describing its real problems, then introducing practical programs and detailed solutions for the problems and urgent matters in people's lives.

One reason for this exaggeration in theorization and lack of the use of revelation is that Islamic discourse has confined itself to the circle of reacting to skepticism on the part of positive intellectual parties, only discussing whether Islam has integral and effective systems in political, economical, social and other fields. This has caused Islamic discourse to become a victim of the duality of denial and proof. That is, whenever Islam is accused of not having one of the aforementioned characteristics in any one system, Islamic discourse takes on the responsibility of reacting by first denying this and then proving the existence of such an effective system in Islam. Whenever certain trends try hard to prove that Islam breaches the principles it calls for, such as human rights and political and religious freedom, Islamic discourse works hard to deny these allegations and prove that Islam respects these principles. Hence, Islamic discourse has become, whether due to good intentions or out of an unawareness of this pitfall, either apologetic or has taken the position of a defender.

Among the consequences of the disregard of the element of revelation in Islamic discourse is the intensification of the tendency of skepticism in the validity of Islam as a way of life. This is because when Islamic discourse does not go beyond the theoretical level when demonstrating Islamic alternatives, a kind of skepticism about whether the Islamic project has realistic alternatives on the practical level will form. Moreover, doubts will arise about the truth and authenticity of these theories, and the validity and justification of applying them. Thus, Islamic discourse will lose its credibility and become – in the opinion of many – a missionary discourse that gives tidings of salvation and deliverance rather than being a reforming discourse with strong principles and clear and effective programs.

Secondly: Fractionation and Totality:

One of the defects that weakens the methodology of Islamic discourse is the exaggeration of fractionation at the expense of totality and a comprehensive view when tackling the content of Islamic discourse and real-life issues. This factor has affected Islamic discourse on several levels:

1. The Level of Understanding:

Fractionation has influenced the way in which actual events and issues are understood and handled. The clearest example of this is the way of handling issues without paying attention to the factors of time and place that affect them and led to their emergence. The partial treatment of issues becomes extremely superficial to the extent that it becomes silly to identify an event and try to understand and deal with it. This is a result of tackling events in isolation from the circumstances that define them, and which may eventually distort their reality.

Consequently, there should be more emphasis on considering the context of events when presenting them, and discussing cases in order to reach a correct understanding and therefore form a complete and comprehensive plan to handle them and solve their problems.

It is worth noting that fractionation is not a method chosen by those who formulate discourse to discuss social, political and economical issues as well as other issues. Rather, more often than not it is a methodology imposed on these formulators due to the weakness of their cultural knowledge and poor awareness of their local, regional and international reality. They do not acquire their awareness of the issues around them from the current political, economical and cultural reality, but they obtain their knowledge from historical sayings and events that are quite often not related to the reality they live in.

Also, this methodology forces upon them a form of cognitive isolation which leads to a deficiency in their knowledge of the current trends of psychological, social and experimental sciences and other sciences. As a result, they lack the necessary tools of communication with the self as well as the "other". In this context, any formulator of Islamic discourse should concentrate on more than just his professional or academic specialization.

He also needs a deep and comprehensive knowledge of his local and international reality with all its intricacies. To illustrate, ignorance of one's

reality is a kind of isolation from it, which in turn deprives discourse of the realistic dimension that stimulates the receiver's interest to learn and change.

As opposed to the fractionation methodology as a way to understand events and issues, there is the totality methodology. The latter requires that when studying any case, all political, social, cultural and economical aspects should be presented in order to have a complete picture. That is because isolating the case from its circumstances will distort its reality, which will lead to the danger of forming a wrong perspective of how to deal with it.

For example, the influence of the media on the identity of the Islamic society cannot be addressed without taking into consideration the current international political scene which depends on two factors: information and communication on one side, and globalization with its different aspects, especially the cultural one, on the other side. The comprehension of globalization and information technology will undoubtedly help understand the bases of how others build and promote their concepts, as well as the techniques by which they shape the cultural and intellectualstructure of their society and other societies. Understanding these aspects and points of view will help us draw a true picture of the deep influence the international media has on the Islamic identity. This will help us draft an integrated project that rises above the mentality of mere condemnation and shedding of tears. It will be a project which draws a systematic plan to minimize such an influence and reinforces the level of society's self-immunity.

Similarly, we cannot understand the Arab-Israeli conflict comprehensively and correctly without taking into consideration the aspects controlling the international policy concerning this conflict, and the nature of the relationship between the Arab and Islamic countries and the new world order.

2. The Level of Eloquence:

It is still common in our religious discourse to divide its content into separate chapters (e.g., acts of worship, dealings, morals and ethics, biographies, economics, etc.) without any attempt to provide a strong link between them in a way that clearly shows the interrelation that combines the different Islamic systems. The ethical factor, for example, is not given its due right when matters of worship and dealings are tackled. In the same manner, worship and dealings are not given their due right when matters of ethics and behavior are addressed. Also, Islamic jurisprudence is rarely associated with the Divine jurisprudence as regards to the imposition of

punishments on individuals and societies as a result of the spread of sin and religious violations.

This fractionation view has caused the spread of misconceptions about Islam and what it entails. Among such misconceptions is the idea that although Islam is a comprehensive way of life, it is concerned with matters of worship and dealings more than ethics. Another misconception is that the violations of ethics are not as serious as those pertaining to the acts of worship; or the violations in dealings are not as serious as those in acts of worship. In addition, it is thought that the individual's jurisprudence regulating one's relationship with one's Lord is more important and takes priority over the jurisprudence of the society and the state which regulates the national and societal institutions.

Due to the same approach, we find ourselves talking about the value of work, and how everyone should earn their own living through good and lawful means. However, we do not exert the same effort to discuss the unemployment problem, or the role of the state and society in solving this problem, as well as the practical steps needed to do so. People just talk about honesty and dishonesty in the individuals' daily dealings without talking about the administrative corruption or the exploitation of administrative positions to serve personal purposes. In spite of all that, we are aware and even declare that Islam is a comprehensive religion and its teachings are comprehensive; that is, the reformation of society is related to the reformation of the individual, and the reformation of society facilitates the reformation of the individual. Also, the reformation of dealings can be attained through the reformation of worship and vice versa. Moreover, the reformation of work is achieved through the reformation of knowledge, and so on. These important rules are expressed in the Noble Qur'ân, the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (PBUH), and what has been handed down to us about the history of the righteous *Salaf*(Muslim predecessors).

3. The Level of Criticism:

It is the nature of political, intellectual and religious trends and doctrines that they are governed by an integral and systematic structure under which there are a number of components that vary and are renewed every now and then. From this structure many policies, movements and events originate and penetrate into the political, media, cultural, and social aspects of life unnoticed, under disguises. When criticizing the opposing intellectual approaches and trends, Islamic discourse typically concentrates

on criticizing the components and disregards the philosophical dimensions. However, studying the philosophical dimension which governs the attitudes of the other view, and discovering its pitfalls and problems will lead to an automatic fall of all the components that come under it.

Hereupon, we can assert that criticism of the philosophy rather than the components will make Islamic discourse more efficient. It would help uncover their philosophy, expose the policies and pursue the components. It would change it from a routine criticism aiming at expressing a mere objection into an effective criticism aiming at imposing an effective change. We have a good example of this from among our righteous *Salaf* (Muslim predecessors); namely, they would dispute with the disbelievers and the apostates by criticizing their systems and their governing methodologies. The best example is how Imâm Ash-Shâfi`î handled the case of "The Arabic nature of the Noble Qur'ân"; an issue that was raised by an anti- Arab movement that appeared during his time. This movement aimed at attacking Islam by attacking the Arabs in general and the Arabic language in particular. The motive directing that movement was its awareness of the dialectic relationship between Islam and Arabic. It thus began to criticize the ancestry and history of the Arabs as well the Arabic language by denying its unique position and superiority over other languages and trying to attribute the origins of some of its vocabulary to Persian or other non-Arabic languages. This was so as to prove the inability of Arabic to produce its own meanings, denotations and terms, and hence conclude that Arabic should not be seen as the richest of languages.

Imâm Ash-Shâfi`î realized that the attempt of the anti-Arab movement to criticize the Arabic language was not a target, but a means to distort and misinterpret the meaning of the Qur'ân by claiming that Arabic is not the only medium of Revelation, and that there are other non-Arabic languages in the Qur'ân. As a result, it would not be methodologically appropriate – from their point of view – to interpret the meanings of the Qur'ân and deduce its rulings by only applying the rules and denotations of the Arabic language.

Thus, Ash-Shâfi`î did not concern himself with the case raised by this movement as regards the Arabic language or the non-Arabic words. Instead, he exerted a lot of effort to prove the importance of the Arabic language in conveying the religious texts, both the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah*, by asserting

two essential principles. The first is that there are no non-Arabic words in the Qur'ân, and the second is that the Noble Qur'ân is interpreted according to the rules of the Arabs' language. Imâm Ash-Shâfi'î used intellectual dialogue to deeply implant these two principles. His dialogue was based upon presenting all the ambiguities of the facts used to substantiate the idea that there are non-Arabic words in the Noble Qur'ân and discussing them logically. When reaching the desired results, he would substantiate such results with verses from the Qur'ân.

Thirdly: Dictation and Dialogue:

Language books have given many meanings to the term "dictation", the most famous of which is that it means 'to impart knowledge to someone who cannot understand'. Such a meaning carry the denotation that the one who is conveying something assumes – or notices – that the recipient does not have the ability to understand although s/he is ready to acquire the information to be imparted. Moreover, dictation depends on both trust and submission on the part of the recipient towards the instructor. For this reason, it is traditionally known that the person who advices the dying person to say the Two Testimonies of Faith[(1)] should be from among his/her family and friends, so as to ensure his/her response. These factors make

dictation a direct form of discourse that is in no need of logical argument to help convince the recipient of the idea, because the recipient has already accepted it (due to either knowing the idea before hand or due to accepting the words of the instructor without considering the facts that support the idea). For this reason, dictation is a process that pumps ideas and information into the recipient's mind, leaving no room for logical thinking or scientific analysis. This form of discourse does not allow the recipients of contemporary Islamic discourse to develop their powers of understanding nor does it encourage them to have strong, stable convictions. This is due to some reasons, the most important of which are:

- Dictation depends on a one-way process rather than a two-way one. It is conducted between the addressee and the addressor. Consequently, this will impede the thought processes as well as the investigative and research skills of the recipient.

(1) Declaring that there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah.

- Dictation, in this sense, is a domineering method of education that only creates human stereotypes with mechanical knowledge that are unable to interact with different theories, whether at the level of understanding and comprehension or at the level of criticism and analysis. These stereotypes always need someone to think and take decisions for them, because they are unable to participate at any stage of conviction or formation of opinion.

The massive development in the field of communication and media, in addition to the resulting information revolution, has put the contemporary individual before a huge amount of knowledge and information. This has granted him a kind of personal independence and has allowed him to take his time before accepting or adopting ideas presented by the various types of discourse. This situation imposes many duties on Islamic discourse, the most important of which is to avoid dictation and adopt dialogue. This will guarantee that Islamic discourse will have an effective role in forming convictions and articulating concerns. Resorting to dictation during discourse with oneself or with the "other" will deprive one of a very important role in the discourse process; namely, being part of a dialogue with oneself or with others as a preliminary stage of forming opinions.

Islamic discourse can take this role if it relies on dialogue with the addressee by letting him participate and by starting from the points of agreement, stressing on them and then moving forward, rather than limiting the discourse to the points of discord and filling it with repudiation and refusal.

Fourthly: Heart and Mind:

One of the principles that should govern modern Islamic discourse methodology is the principle of using both the heart and mind, without focusing on one and disregarding the other. The wisdom behind this is that exaggerating emotions will weaken the discourse and will not build convictions. Also, the accumulation of information and scientific facts concerning a specific subject does not necessarily lead the recipient to be convinced about this subject. Thus, Islamic discourse should integrate between the mind and emotions when forming its content, since each of them serves an important aspect in the persuasion and influencing process that the other factor cannot compensate.

Addressing the mind using logic and applying scientific methodologies in arranging, presenting and analyzing thoughts is a noble Qur'anic

methodology that has been highlighted in Qur'anic verses tackling the issue of inviting and addressing "the other" as well as the verses talking about the universe. It is a methodology that confirms that the instrument for change is the mind, which Allah honored Adam (PBUH) with and for which He ordered the angels to prostrate before him. It is the mind that made him the commissioned successor who would bear the responsibility, the arbitrator between truth and falsehood, and enlightenment and misguidance. There were no differences among our ancestors – despite their differences regarding sects or paths – with regard to the importance of thinking, deduction and inference.

Addressing the recipients' emotions, whetting their energies and sparkling their enthusiasm towards the presented idea will activate their response. The reason for this is that everyone has emotions and motivations that determine their attitudes and control their behavior. Quite often, changing motivations in the persuasion process is more important and takes priority over changing information. Here, it is clear that it is necessary to address these motivations directly, after defining them and determining their causes and effects.

Fourth Element: Mechanisms of Islamic Discourse:

Discussing the methodological bases of Islamic discourse requires laying down mechanisms to well-establish these bases and ensure their effectiveness.

The most important of these mechanisms are: planning the discourse, mastering discourse and communication skills, and transferring the problem of Islamic discourse from the individual level to the institutional one.

First Mechanism: Discourse Planning

Planning, which is now a characteristic feature of any activity, is defined as "to determine the desired goals in the light of the present and future capabilities, and the methods and options to achieve these goals." It is also defined as "the procedures taken to fulfill future needs by the most effective means on the basis of previous experiences, or analysis of predictive information."[1]

Planning consists of four elements:

(1) Nabil 'Attâs: Dictionary of Management. p.52.

a. Determining goals

b. Preparing and organizing the best means to achieve these goals

c. Putting an integrated plan to achieve these goals

d. Following up the execution of the plan in order to solve the problems under discussion.

What is meant by discourse planning?

Discourse planning is a complete and accurate scientific study of the problems of modern Islamic discourse. Its purpose is to determine the nature of these problems and control their limits and dimensions, then search for solutions. This can be carried out by laying down an organized plan that includes a clear description of the present Islamic discourse, realistic deeprooted aims of how it should be, and the available means that can achieve these goals. All this should be conducted in the light of calculated expectations of the discourse's targeted audiences, and the new developments in real life as well as determining the best solutions to deal with them.

Reasons for Discourse Planning

There are a number of reasons that make the issue of discourse planning an urgent priority in the framework of handling the crisis of modern Islamic discourse. The most important of these reasons are:

- Failure to utilize Islamic discourse in the best way to handle the issues facing the Muslim Nation has dictated the need for quick and serious action to come up with practical solutions to make discourse effective. A matter with such a degree of priority and importance should undergo planning and not be leftft to spontaneity.

- The Muslim Nation, in the current times, lacks material capabilities and world inflfluence to bring itself out of its self-inflflicted isolation so as to be able to have its own effect on "the other" by providing actual opportunities to do so. This renders Islamic discourse, with its loftfty, cultural content, the only means to attract world attention to the Muslim Nation. This calls for reconsidering this discourse in order to make it able to face up to this challenge, in terms of performance, style and approach. It is a massive effort and a qualitative move and the only guarantee for its success is to put discourse planning among our top priorities, and not leave it to circumstances and individual initiatives.

Requirements of Discourse Planning

There are three basic requirements:

First: Laying down a Clear and Integrated Policy for Islamic Discourse

By discourse policy we mean the general principles and main approaches upon which discourse planning is based. The main role of this policy is to set the goals that are to be achieved within a specific period and under the framework of Islamic discourse.

The general policies of Islamic discourse planning include the following:

- Specific discourse aims that govern the content and roles of Islamic discourse in the Islamic community.

- General discourse aims that determine the nature of communication with non-Muslims (i.e., "the other").

Second: Setting a Strategy for Islamic Discourse

The second stage of discourse planning involves setting a strategy for contemporary Islamic discourse. The purpose of such a strategy is to transform the policies of discourse into practical projects that should be ordered according to importance, priority and desired results. The difference between policy and strategy is that policy is concerned with setting goals, whereas strategy is concerned about how to achieve these goals; namely, to set the framework and methods through which the available human and material resources will be mobilized, organized and directed in both the present and the future. The purpose behind this is to achieve the goals that are set and drawn up in the discourse policy. Among the requirements of discourse strategy are the processes of arranging the goals of discourse, and organizing them according to their importance and results, their response to the needs of the target audience, and the limits of their application with regard to the available human and material resources. This necessitates choosing the best among the available alternatives, in addition to coming up with possible alternatives for unexpected circumstances.

The strategic planning of Islamic discourse depends upon three elements:

a) The ability to infer and analyze the current Islamic discourse

The setting of an effective strategy for Islamic discourse is preceded by studying the existing discourse and identifying its shortcomings, and how it fulfifils the needs of the current situation both internally and externally, as well as the extent of the effifficiency and profificiency of its producers.

Understanding the current situation of Islamic discourse does not stop at just explaining and describing its points of weakness and shortcoming,

but it goes beyond this to attempt to identify and understand the reasons behind them, and then suggest appropriate solutions. This undoubtedly helps formulate practical and effective insight so as to develop Islamic discourse and overcome its methodological and topical problems. In fact, most of those concerned with Islamic discourse, whether its producers or recipients, agree that the main shortcomings of Islamic discourse are its monotonousness and casualness. There are several reasons for these two shortcomings, but the eventual reason is that Islamic discourse, for the most part, does not take into consideration the nature of the target audience, nor the methods and tools used in the communication process. As long as the target audience is the most important variable in the communication process, this necessitates getting to know the different types of targeted audiences, how each type receives certain forms of discourse and whether there are one or numerous levels of reception and response. It is clear that answering these questions requires the use of scientific methods of planning, such as research, statistics and fifield studies, so as to identify the target audiences, since discourse needs to vary according to the different types of audience. While the principles and values are stable, the tools and the means vary according to the differences in the audience, environment and beliefs.

Accordingly, making the international community, for instance, understand Islamic issues relies on setting a sound discourse strategy that employs effective ways and means which suit the circumstances of the target audience addressed by the Islamic discourse. This is in addition to taking into account the political, social, economic and cultural ircumstances prevailing in these communities when attempting to present Islamic issues and discuss them with "the other", aiming to convince them of the fairness of these issues.

b) The ability to understand and analyze the current state

In addition to the current state of discourse, setting a discourse strategy necessitates knowing the current local and international circumstances by carrying out an accurate study that covers its various aspects. The success of any change or reform relies strongly on the extent to which those responsible for bringing about the change understand the circumstances calling for the change.

Moreover, the setting of a discourse strategy necessitates studying the Islamic and international communities to be able to know their main components and the needs of the public in order to design a discourse able

to meet such needs. Ignoring or disregarding the social, cultural and political events and issues of the community produces a discourse that is isolated from the current reality. Such a discourse deals with Islam as merely being rigid frames, and juristic and doctrinal rulings that do not relate to the different aspects of the individual's life. Thus, the inflfluence of Islamic discourse on the current status is determined according to the knowledge or ignorance of the discourse's producers as regards the events and issues controlling their life.

c) The ability to envisage the future

This means being able to envision the future based on accurate knowledge of the present as well as an understanding of the lessons of the past. Though futurology has become a science that is taught in universities as one of the humanities, it has not yet taken its place in our modern thought process. This is due to our unbalanced way of dealing with the three dimensions of time: past, present and future. That is, although the past exists strongly and deeply in our thought process, we fifind the present very weak because of our inability to investigate and analyze the current reality. As for the future, we perceive it as being completely or almost absent.

In addition to an understanding of the present, the strategic planning of Islamic discourse requires analyzing the projections of the future and planning them to avoid any problems in executing discourse policies and plans. Moreover, taking the factor of future probabilities into account when planning discourse will render Islamic discourse effective in many ways, such as:

Taking Islamic discourse out of the reaction cycle into the scope of making and directing events, and formulating concerns and investing them into forming public opinions which support the issues of Islamic discourse and adopt its visions.

Making discourse planning a continuous process that does not end with setting just one plan. The matter necessitates a continuous succession of plans in the form of long-term planning.

Following up of topical plans during and aftfter execution, discovering the obstacles that hinder execution, and working to remove and avoid them in future plans.

Measuring and evaluating the results of executing the discourse plans and making suitable modifications to suit the set policies. Marching into the scope of "the other" with new topics which will bring Islamic discourse out of the circle of reaction into the circle of action.

Third: Discourse Plan

The third stage of the discourse planning process involves setting a discourse plan that transforms the discourse policy and strategy into a reality that can be read, heard and seen through fully-integrated programs and campaigns characterized by well-organized and scheduled plans that are in line with the goals that want to be achieved.

First Mechanism: Mastering Communication Skills

Communication skills are among the fundamentals of the success of Islamic discourse as regards conveying its message to the target audience more effectively. That is because discourse planning, as well as its strategies and policies, cannot achieve its desired goal of activating Islamic discourse if those in charge of the discourse lack communication skills, such as thinking, speaking, listening, dialoguing, persuading and negotiating, and the other skills that guarantee the clear understanding of the audience, the organized planning of the discourse, and, accordingly, the effectiveness of this discourse. Therefore, there is no exaggeration in saying that the difference between one type of discourse and another, with regard to effectiveness and conviction, accurately reflects the differences in the communication skills between those conducting these two different types of discourse.

Imâm Ash-Shâtibî (may Allah have mercy on him) stressed the importance of the skills of communication and dialogue to ensure the effectiveness and good performance of all the elements of the communication process. These elements include: the sender, the recipient, the message and the circumstances. He stressed this by talking about the importance of knowing the reasons for the Revelation of the Qur'ân and the prevailing circumstances in order to understand and realize the goals of Islamic discourse. In this connection, he said:

"Knowing the reasons for the revelation (of the Qur'ân) is a prerequisite for anyone who wants to study the Qur'ân. This can be confirmed by considering two matters. First, understanding that semantics, through which one can perceive the miraculousness of the text of the Qur'ân in addition to the denotation of the language of the Arabs, depends basically on the need to know the prevailing circumstances: the circumstances of the discourse with regard to the speech itself, the speaker or the audience, or may be all of them. That is, the same discourse could be understood in different ways according to different circumstances. For example, a question can carry different meanings such as reprimand or affirmation, and a command can carry

meanings of permission, warning, challenge, etc. The intended meaning is only confirmed by external factors, the principal ones of which are the accompanying circumstances.

Moreover, not all circumstances can be transmitted, nor can all contexts be applied to the same transmitted discourse. Here, when certain contexts are not transmitted, the discourse will not be understood, either wholly or partially. Thus, knowing the reasons removes any problem or doubt. This matter is so important in understanding the Qur'ân. In other words, knowing the reason means knowing the circumstances. Second, ignoring the reasons behind the revelations results in confusion, causing clear texts to be understood in a general way which may lead to differences and conflict." (1)

These skills are not only fundamental for understanding Islamic discourse, but they are also needed to build the Islamic discourse. This is because they greatly help Islamic discourse overcome its methodological crises that are caused by the mentality of dictation, narrow-mindedness, naivety and the distorted view of reality, as well as the misuse of events. For instance, the skills of dialogue can teach the speaker how to listen well to the discourse of 'the other' and discover the system and logic that govern it, and how to discover the aspects that influence the audience and make them act. In addition, such skills help the speaker expand on the points of agreement and lessen those of disagreement, succeed in creating a common ground between him and the audience, and invest this ground to activate dialogue and bring it to a high level of understanding and conformity.

Moreover, these skills help one discover the reasons behind differences, and whether they are ideological convictions or psychological motives. In case they are ideological convictions, then what were the stages that shaped them? What is the right way to discuss and rectify these wrong convictions? If the differences are due to psychological motives, then what is the right method to address and change them? As for the skill of persuasion, it teaches the speaker the art of addressing people in terms of their needs and helping them determine the ways to achieve these needs, as well as the art of discussing issues from different angles, not only one angle. In addition, this skill teaches the speaker how to form and present the arguments that support his view, discuss and refute the arguments that contradict his view, and

(1) Ash-Shâtibî, "Al-Muwâfaqât" (Agreements), 3/347.

increase the opportunities of influencing and convincing the audience by outlining an objective presentation and analysis of the opposing views, and ensuring a high degree of acceptance as regards the opposing points of view.

Hence, every one of the communication skills helps the speaker improve his performance and develop his discourse abilities.

Second Mechanism: Shiftfting the Problem of Islamic Discourse from the Individual Level to the Institutional One

One task that guarantees the success of the project of activating Islamic discourse involves shifting this matter from the individual level to the institutional one. A project of such importance and immensity must not be left to individual, voluntary efforts; rather, it should be adopted by scientific institutions which are able to shift it from the theoretical level to the practical one. This is the custom of all important strategic projects. For instance, when the Christian missionary movements

wanted to export their beliefs to the world, they established missionary institutes, exerted great effort and spent a great deal of money to spread Christianity to the jungles of Africa and Latin America. Moreover, hen Orientalism wanted to dominate the Islamic world, it established its Orientalist institutions in Europe and America in order to understand the Islamic world and find the best means to contest its beliefs and, accordingly, control it.

Further, when Communism, in the past, wanted to export its ideology, it established the Moscow Institute of Atheism; one of the prominent scientific institutes previously ran by the Soviet Academy of Sciences affiliated to the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The aim of this institute was to set scientific plans for atheism and to provide the Communist party leaders outside the Soviet Union with plans to follow in their promotion of atheism.

Hereupon, in order to raise the level of our Islamic discourse to be up to the challenges that face it, an international institute for Islamic discourse must be established. This institute needs to be a scientific intellectual institute working towards making Islamic discourse influential. This is considered one of the foundations of the Islamic reform project. Also, this project should include the contribution of scientists, intellectuals, researchers and the well-educated elite in general. The missions of this institute should involve the following:

- Setting policies, strategies and plans for contemporary Islamic discourse.

- Holding conferences, symposia and workshops to study the crises and problems of Islamic discourse, and develop approaches to initiate it.

- Executing research projects and studies concerned with enhancing the role of Islamic discourse.

- Publishing well-designed books and scientific periodicals concerned with the issues of Islamic discourse.

- Providing universities, research centers and institutions that participate in developing Islamic discourse and a strategy for this discourse.

- Establishing training centers affiffiliated to the institute whose role is to make those in charge of Islamic discourse qualified to be aware of discourse planning as well as training them in communication skills. This program should include different scientific studies, such as psychology, sociology, media studies, communication and other sciences that enable those responsible for the discourse understand people and reality, and inflfluence both of them.

- Monitoring opposing campaigns in order to reveal their sources, aims and means, and try to contain them. Additionally, the most important means to ensure the effectiveness and continuity of this institute in performing the aforementioned tasks is to carry out evaluation and apply it as one of the fundamental functions of discourse planning by performing a comprehensive evaluation of the discourse. This process should begin by setting standards in order for evaluation to be a strategic process whose main goal is to impose the necessary modifications and developments in the light of the evaluation results and the rising variables.

This evaluation should cover the discourse policies, strategies and plans together with the discourse's level of performance and effect on the current status, as well as the professional efficiency of those in charge of it.

In order for the evaluation to be complete, it must be performed before, during and after the execution of the discourse plan. Each one of these stages should have a main aim upon which the evaluation process concentrates. Before executing the plan, the aim of the evaluation should be to collect basic information on the current status towards which discourse

will be directed. This will help predict the type and nature of the changes that may possibly occur after applying the discourse plan. During the execution of the discourse plan, the aim of evaluation should be to know the extent of the progress made by the discourse, the reactions of the target audience and the obstacles facing it. After the plan has been carried out, the evaluation should tackle the various effects of the discourse with the aim of identifying the positive effects as well as the negative ones, and subsequently suggesting the necessary modifications.

Moreover, in order for the evaluation process to succeed in enhancing the role of Islamic discourse, it must form a fundamental and constant element in the strategy of the above-mentioned institute of Islamic discourse, for which the necessary human and material resources should be allocated.

The results of evaluation should be used in the planning and development of the institute's work, methods and programs. Also, the evaluation process should be administered by those who have both practical experience in the field of Islamic discourse and theoretical knowledge of evaluation and its tools. Furthermore, the institute should perform field studies to measure the effectiveness of the discourse plan by applying techniques that measure the quantitative and qualitative changes in the levels of behavior and events.

Conclusion

At the end of this research, we have to assert that our Muslim Nation possesses the material and human resources and capabilities which can help it reach the farthest and most difficult aims in a record time and with highly-guaranteed results. To that end, it has to define its goals well, scientifically and professionally plan its projects and policies, and carefully and sincerely execute its strategies. It has to know that the road to develop a contemporary Islamic discourse starts with preliminary, steady and insightful steps that work toward a goal, look forward to the future, and desire positive results. These steps should be taken in a way that makes the mind interact with the heart, and the past interact with the present, so as to produce an enlightened future that abides by principles but does not ignore the variables.

We should consider our role model, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), who started alone, yet with Allah's Favor, he (PBUH) reached the highest level of honor and glory, thanks to his patience and discretion in seeking the steps that led to victory. Our role models after him (PBUH) are the *Salaf* (the righteous followers of the Prophet (PBUH)) who represent the highest examples of those who perfect their work and show sincerity in serving Islam and its followers.

Islamic discourse is our discourse. Thus, it is our responsibility and its perfection is our most pressing duty. Perfection is a fruit of Allah's favor and enlightened, sincere and responsible work. Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***And say (O Muhammad) "Act! Allah will behold your actions, and (so will) His messenger and the believers.***﴾ [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 105]

Islamic Discourse and Sociocultural Changes

Pro. Ibrâhîm Gharâybah (*)

Efforts to develop should be continuous. Contributions accumulate over time, creating a new state that will be subjected to several improvements, ending up in a better situation. Then, the new state will become engaged in the same process of revision and improvement, and so on.

In recent years, there have been major cultural, social, political, economic and technological changes on the national, regional and international levels. The whole world has dramatically changed, including Islamic discourse! Consideration of such changes is crucial to understand where we were, are, and will be; what we gained and lost; what we want and how to adapt it to our resources; and how to stop wasting our efforts and take real steps on the right way?

This paper will discuss the contemporary changes and suggest ways for Islamic discourse to deal with such changes.

(*) Researcher on Islamic Thought (Jordan).

The Concept of Islamic Discourse

Recently introduced to the Arab-Islamic literature, the concept of "Islamic discourse" has gained a fixed and positive content. Though not elaborately defined and scrutinized, it has almost become commonly accepted within the general cultural and media circles.

As envisioned from the general intellectual context and personal observation, not through standardized scientific definition, discourse is the system of the practical expression of an idea, philosophy or culture. Analogously, Islamic discourse can be defined as the practical representation of the Islamic approaches to ideology, politics, economics and other aspects of life.

Islamic discourse is not synonymous with the Islamic religion itself, though it results from acting upon Islam. It is just a human effort that can possibly be right or wrong, close to or distant from Islam, inspired positively or negatively by the climate, and it can be inventive or ineffectual. Islamic discourse is not one single entity like Islam; it involves several discourses, depending on the consideration of the *Shar'ī* texts, Islamic tradition and the surrounding environment.

Islamic politics, economics, media, education, institutions or even governments are all attributive terms. In fact, the attribution here is to Muslims, not to Islam itself! Also, they are relative; i.e. they seek perfection but are not necessarily or absolutely right. First introduced as a scientific theory by the well-known physicist Einstein in 1905, relativity has today become a widely common philosophy involving every aspect of science, thought and life as a whole.

Changes and Surrounding Environment of Islamic Discourse

It is difficult to discuss all the contemporary, global changes which affect Islamic discourse. In fact, this requires large scale, independent studies. For the purposes of the current paper, we are concerned only with examining the most important changes and suggesting ideas to outline the features and requirements of the future Islamic discourse.

These changes have created new priorities and needs, which largely alter the duties and nature of the reform efforts. There have also merged many achievements and gains which should be reviewed to redirect efforts and resources towards the unachieved goals. Of course, there have been several challenges and defects in the reform work which need to be considered. In this context, a number of changes and observations can be highlighted:

1. The Islamic world is experiencing a large-scale Islamic revival, which represents a basic component of the Muslims' contemporary life and should be taken into account when implementing reform.

2. The United States has attained dominance over the world, aftfter the collapse of the international balance of power that served all countries on the planet. Anyway, it is a temporary state that cannot last longer than 20-25 years. Then, the world is expected to enter a new multipole global balance, in which the most powerful elements will include Europe, China, Russia, India and East Asia. On this point, a serious question arises that needs contemplation: Can the Islamic world become a world power or a capable part of the world in the next 25 years?

3. Islam-attributed violence (through extremist networks and violent activists) and its consequences for the Islamic world have been direly aggravated. These consequences include the military, imperialistic penetration of the United States, and the West in general, into the Islamic world, occupying parts of it as large as Afghanistan and Iraq, and threatening their people and resources. These events, particularly the destruction of the World Trade Center's Twin Towers in New York on the September 11, 2001, have negatively affected Muslim-West relations and opened wide the door to conflict, hatred and aggression.

4. The revolution of informatics and communication has changed the historical courses of societies, resources and criteria, both strengthening some and weakening others. Globalization has made this world a very different place than it has ever been before.

In-depth investigation of this revolution can help formulate a new Islamic discourse that takes into account these changes which have brought humankind into modernity, an era of utmost importance in history ever since the agricultural era and the industrial revolution.

Equivalent Changes in Islamic Discourse

1. From Politics to Reform

The reform work was initiated by efforts of reformers such as Muhammad Ibn `Abdul-Wahhâb (Saudi Arabia), Jamâlud-Dîn Al-Afghânî (different parts of the Ottoman Empire), Muhammad `Abduh and Rashîd Ridâ (Egypt), `Abdur-Rahmân Al-Kawâkibî (Syria), Muhammad Bil-Hasan Bil-Ahjawî and `Allâl Al-Fâsî (Morocco), `Abdul-Hamîd Ibn Bâdîs and Mâlik Ibn Nabî (Algeria), and At-Tâhir `Îshûr (Tunisia). Contributions were made by political-religious orders like the Sanussi (Libya), the Mahadist Movement (Sudan), the Murids (Caucasia) and the Nurasi Group (Turkey).

This reform and development legacy was adopted by popular Islamic organizations, such as the Muslim Brotherhood Movement (founded by Hasan Al-Bannâ, a student of Sheikh Rashîd Ridâ), the Islamic Movement in the Indian subcontinent and the Shiite Islamic Movement in Iran.

Today, the Islamic reform action has become so complex and involves political systems which are based on Islamic ideologies (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Iran, Sudan and Afghanistan), Muslim nationality (e.g. Pakistan), Islamic participation in political life (e.g. the Welfare Party and the Justice and Development Party in Turkey; the Islamic Front, the Movement for the Society of Peace and the National Movement for Reform in Algeria; the Islamic Movement in Yemen and Jordan; as well as many other religiously- affiliated parties) and national-liberation movements (e.g. Hamas, the Islamic Jihad Movement in Palestine and Hezbollah). Furthermore, there are numerous national and international Islamic organizations, universities, banks, corporations, relief agencies, research centers, newspapers and media channels.

One of the most important characteristics of the newly emerging Islamic situation is that the reformative efforts made by pioneers and organized movements have turned into a national trend that is socially undertaken at the group and individual levels. This transition requires reconsideration of the reformative courses of action to make them relevant to the evolving priorities, needs, opportunities and challenges.

Many historians and thinkers consider the 1967 Arab-Israeli War a starting point for a dramatic change in the situation of the Islamic nation, leading to a comprehensive Islamic revival. Actually, the June Defeat had a great impact on the Arab, and in general Islamic, sentiments and attitudes.

In his book "Accountability for the Defeat", Dr. Muhammad Jâbir Al-Ansârî maintained that the June War was the worst defeat of the Arabs all through the 20th century. It has rendered the Arab intellect to be "under siege" for the last 3 decades. In his opinion, the memory of the defeat is still alive in the Arabs' minds and they do not seem to have got rid of its burdens and distress. The statement about "clearing the effects of aggression", raised by the former president Gamal Abdel Nasser following the defeat, seemed to have been pregnant with pains as well as implications.

As described by Rajâ' An-Naqqâsh, it was a "loss of spirit". It had never happened before that the Arabs had experienced any similar disaster. Nadîm Al-Bîtâr diagnosed the defeat, "It was a defeat of the very conceptual and mental infrastructures of the Arab society. It showed their political, economic, technological, cultural and, obviously, military backwardness." This defeat caused many Arab thinkers and radical reformers to strictly review their thoughts and persuasions, some of them even committing suicide, such as Khalîl Hâwî (Lebanese poet) and Taysîr Sabbûl (Jordanian poet).

The Arab revolutionary movement and the Left Wing were the first to fall victim to the defeat. The nationalist thinker Hishâm Sharâbî (Syria) wrote an analysis of the defeat, "The excitement of the revolution did not last for long. I realized that it was not an easy matter, and that just because we believed change should happen did not mean it would. I began to understand how change was very complex. Thereupon, my thinking took a different direction, focusing on our social reality and the reasons for its corruption. I began to wonder about the construction of our Arab society and the behavior of its members." Thus, it appeared that the blame for our defeat should be transferred from the "Egyptian malfunctioning weapons" (during the 1948 Arab-Israeli war) to the "corrupted formula" as a whole.

The Left Wing quickly vanished, just for an overwhelming Islamic revival to appear. Although the fact that the Islamic revival manifested itself particularly in the early 1970s, in 1965 the book by Sayyid Qutb titled "Signposts on the Road" was an early sign for major Islamic changes or rather the first "manifesto" of the current Islamic movement throughout the Islamic sphere, from Egypt to Algeria and Afghanistan. It came perhaps too early for its effectiveness to be apparent, compared to the Communist Manifesto (1848). Ghâzî Al-Qusaybî, a Saudi writer, poet and politician, described this book in his novel "Al-`Usfûriyyah" by one of the novel's characters saying, "It is the most important book to appear in the last five centuries."

It is historically believed that Jamâlud-Dîn Al-Afghânî was the founder of the contemporary Islamic movement, and that his ideological and reformative efforts influenced entire Muslim generations. He enjoyed a considerable status in different parts of the Islamic world which he had visited, from Afghanistan (his country of origin) to Iran, India, France, Egypt, Iraq and Turkey. Al-Afghânî and his disciples, particularly Muhammad `Abduh, played important roles in the administrative reform of such institutions as Al-Azhar educational system and the public courts. One student of Muhammad `Abduh was Rashîd Ridâ, whose magazine, Al-Manâr, acquired a highly respectable reputation all over the Islamic world. Hasan Al-Bannâ had a strong relationship with Rashîd Ridâ, and he ran Al-Manâr Magazine for some time after the death of Sheikh Ridâ.

The succession of Jamâlud-Dîn Al-Afghânî, Muhammad `Abduh, Rashîd Ridâ, Hasan Al-Bannâ and Sayyid Qutb indicates the course of the development of the Islamic movements as well as the historical stages of the work of reform. This model existed in most of the Arab-Islamic countries.

The Egyptian model, in particular, helps us to understand and generalize the situation, because of the richness of this experience and the free access to information about it. The time sequence and circumstantial relationships may lead us to a misleading understanding of the relationships between different movements. The reformative work's environment, national activism, internal and external influences, success and failures formed a complex combination of conditions, actions and approaches which were not necessarily sequential.

In his book "Islam and Politics: Role of Islamic Action in the Formation of the Political Sphere", `Abdul-Ilâh Bilqazîz identified two Islamic trends. The first was a reformative and progressive trend, represented by Jamâlud-Dîn Al-Afghânî, Muhammad `Abduh, Rashîd Ridâ, `Abdur- Rahmân Al-Kawâkibî and Muhammad Bil-Hasan Bil-Ahjawî (Morocco); and the second was the Islamic revival trend, represented by Hasan Al- Bannâ, Sayyid Qutb, `Abdus-Salâm Yâsîn (Morocco) and Taqiyyud-Dîn An-Nabhânî (the Islamic Party of Liberation).

A dichotomy occurred between the two trends; the latter engaged in politics while the former did not. The interesting paradox, as Bilqazîz indicated, was that reformers had more political awareness than revival activists, even though they kept to their ideological stand as advocates

of a social reform project. Their demands were realistic rather than modest; they were mindful of the facts of the emerging, universal transformation represented by the birth of Western modernity. The revival approach, on the contrary, remained idealistic and did not concern itself with looking for possibilities within the intellectual and social system. It could not liberate itself from its blind wish to work miracles in spite of everything.

The Muslim Brotherhood Movement, founded by its greatest "General Guide" Hasan Al-Bannâ, student of Sheikh Rashîd Ridâ, was an attempt to provide a political representation of the Islamic reformative concept. However, when this attempt took the form of a political party, it ended up by no longer being an ideological project. The approaches of the subsequent generations, derived from the thoughts of Abû Al-A'lâ Al-Mawdûdî, resulted in the emergence of extremist political structures which misapplied the concept of *Jihâd* (i.e. fighting in the Cause of Allah) and caused the political and social spheres to divide apart. These included the group of *At-Takfîr Wal-Hijrah* (Excommunication and Exodus), the Islamic Jihad Movement and others. The period of the resistance against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan provided these groups with a striking force, while the Islamic Revolution of Iran provided them with intellectual and emotional energy.

Some groups within the Islamic movements tried to restore their reformative nature, realizing that extremism and violence are too dangerous in such a moderate society as the Arab world, and that the balance of power was in favor of the governments. They initiated some attempts to return to the methodology of the early founder, Hasan Al-Bannâ, as an ideological and political basis. Examples include At-Turâbî (Sudan) and Râshid Al-Ghanûshî (Tunisia), who represented the best models of open-mindedness and *Ijtihâd* (i.e. legal reasoning and discretion) in the thought of the contemporary Islamic revival. But, unfortunately, At-Turâbî soon fell into the temptation of a military coup, bringing the activistic side of the civil society organizations into power, and ultimately risking the lose of his ideological legacy.

Many Islamic intellectuals who belong to the thought of the Muslim Brotherhood (e.g. Muhammad Al-Ghazâlî, Muhammad Salîm Al-'Awwâ, Târiq Al-Bishrî) believe that the reformative ideological project should be revived to increase Islamic awareness of changes inthe world.

The Islamic thinker Ahmad Kamâl Abul-Majd documented that the Islamic movements emerging in the early to the middle of the 20th century had political goals identical to the mainstream of society, and so they were very widely accepted by the general public. Most of these goals were related to national liberation and resistance of foreign control. This way, all such movements were introduced into the political history of their countries as a cultural, national-liberation movement.

Mr. Târiq Al-Bishrî believed that before the emergence of the western-influenced secular trends, the Islamic movements were part of the overall national-liberation movements as well as the public demands for reform. Afterwards, when there appeared a national secular movement demanding independence, following the Western fashion, the Islamic movement took action and confirmed that Islam governs every aspect of the society, including politics.

In the second half of the 20th century, the political liberation approaches of the Islamic thought and movements began changing towards having a strong opposition to the existing regimes and governments. Unprecedented confrontations and clashes occurred between the two sides and many Arab and Islamic governments tried to get rid of the Islamic movements, both politically and physically. On the other hand, some Islamic movements proceeded to unsettle the political stability of the governments, working outside the political framework and legitimacy.

The Islamic action was transformed from a development potential to a source of danger to the stability of the society, an obstacle to its advancement and welfare, and an incurable, chronic, security problem. With this official security approach, the nation suffered serious harms and missed many benefits.

This shift was heightened, particularly in the last 10 years, by a new Western tripartite alliance. The first party in that alliance sees Islam as a substitute enemy for Communism, a menace to Western interests and a rival of the Western civilization and governments. Another group is influenced largely by a security-oriented, force-using mentality which managed to prevail over prudent policy. The third group includes the secularist elites of writers, thinkers and politicians whose illegitimate interests and privileged positions feel threatened by the Islamic revival.

This shift was further intensified by the emergence of groups which reject others, accuse them of disbelief, and partake in arbitrary violent acts against their own societies or against Western countries. This is exacerbated

by the common belief that the seeds of violence and extremism are inherent in Islamic thought.

In reality, the moderate leaders of the Islamic movement have the ability to take the initiative and work to settle the existing crisis with the West as well as the secularist governments and movements. This can be done by them clearly and sufficiently by taking a stance about their position on violence and excommunication (i.e. accusing others of disbelief) so as to be differentiated from the terrorist groups. Also, they should be clear about their political and ideological approaches to such issues as democracy, pluralism, minority groups, citizenship, women's liberation, public and political freedom, the use of force to come to power and others.

The near future indicates that the Islamic movement is growing within different nations, in a way implying that Islam is becoming the mainstream of the government and administration in the Arab-Islamic world, whether as a result of the existing Islamic movements or not.

Extremists adopt a distorted and immoderate ideology which really includes many sound, but misunderstood, rules and premises. They have a strong dogmatic motive for implementing what they believe in. Thus, forcible confrontation of extremists will not be successful, and may lead them to become even more persistent in their convictions and violent in their actions. Continuous ideological dialogue with the leaders and members of these groups can result in substantial corrections and deprive terrorism from its main resources of sincere and zealous youths who seek guidance but miss the way, as described by the Qur'anic Verse:

﴿*... While they think that they are acquiring good from their work.*﴾ [Al-Kahf (The Cave): 104]

Dr. Abul-Majd suggests a list of prerequisites for the Islamic revival to be able to adapt effectively to the facts of the time in accordance with the moral fundamentals of the authentic Arab-Islamic culture. This can be done by implementing the Islamic rules and views about building a civilization, which serve as an inclusive framework for Muslims and humankind generally (e.g. freedom of thought and expression; addressing internationally shared issues; improvement of Muslim relations and interactions with other nations and cultures; employment of Islamic devices to respond to differences in place and time; taking care of the Islamic aspects which have newly emerged or become different from that known by early *Fiqh* scholars; stop focusing on matters which are widely known by all Muslims, such as the acts of worship, or matters having a negligible role in a Muslims' daily life, such as legal penalties; etc.).

He believes that it is important to make *Fatwâs*[1] undemanding so that situations become easier for people, consider priorities when addressing people, enact legislations and regulations, make use of the experience of other nations, and emphasize the value of freedom within the political and cultural spheres. In his opinion, we should stop perceiving the Islamic Caliphate as a specific type of government that was terminated by the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. What really counts are the principles of justice, rulers' responsibility and observance of the law, derivation of legislations from the fundamentals of the Islamic *Sharî'ah*, and respect for human rights and freedom. Otherwise, Muslims will be contending with devised political structures and measures, just as others do.

The intervention of reformative work in politics necessitated the participation of the Islamic movements in the political, parliamentary, trade union, *Da'wah* (i.e. dissemination of Islamic teachings) and charitable activities. This has created a lot of corruption, despotism, monopolization of public activity, clashes (instead of coordination) with the governments, waste of energy, and misuse of public activity for personal and party aims. As a result, the Islamic movement lost its credibility and reliability.

Islamic propagation has to be associated with the horizontal development of the entire society , so that Islamic work is not subject to disputes, conflicting interests and limited visions. Also, action should move from the organization and group level into the social level.

The Islamic movement is urged to launch a self-motivated initiative whose system of action is interactive with all members rather than hierarchical, and societal rather than organizational. It should make a complete partition between its political and social missions. It is illogical that Islamic movement leaders perform what they are supposed to work against; i.e. monopolization and domination (represented by their efforts to seize control of various charitable, *Da'wah*, political and parliamentary spheres).

This not only represents a kind of misappropriation and monopolization, but also makes the Islamic movement vulnerable and isolated. These leaders transform their personal goals into national and Islamic issues which people are expected to support. Thus, they make it easier for the governments to attack the Islamic movement under the guise of counteracting legal and political violations.

(1) Legal opinions issued by *Muftis* in response to laypeople's questions on points of Islamic *Sharî'ah*.

The procedural partition between the different political, trade union, charitable, institutional and governmental courses of action can transfer the responsibility for the Islamic work, with regard to its experiences and potential, to the whole society; minimize the mentality of monopolization, arrogance and distrust in others; protect the Islamic movement from isolation; and make it more deeply-rooted and widespread within the society, not just a group-specific phenomenon.

Activity, *Da'wah* and reform are the responsibilities of all Muslims and citizens, and not limited exclusively to certain individuals or groups. The mission of the Islamic movement is to mobilize all people in its reformative project, not to compete with them for gains and opportunities. The less personal interests are involved, the more credibility and acceptance will be achieved.

The major changes in the societies and the role of the state, along with the increased growth of the Islamic revival, have created new Islamic priorities and fields of action. Possible indicators of these may be found in the UN Human Development Report and the Arab Human Development Report. The trends cited in the two latest reports include the launch of cultural motives and societal experiences towards development; rallying of societies and institutions to provide such basic rights as justice, equality, security, adequate nutrition, medication, accommodation, education and citizenship; cost-effectiveness; and careful conduction of the modern stage of privatization and the changing role of the state. These guidelines should bring the reformative work into new fields and high priority agendas which respond to contemporary changes and needs. Just as the reformative movements in the past were concerned with their contemporary high priorities of national liberation and independence, they should now commit themselves to human development and public needs, given that these programs best fit their experience and capabilities.

2. Can the Islamic World Become a World Power?

Is it possible that the Islamic nations can constitute an international body or bloc comparable with the existing world powers? This question need not be given a strategic and plain answer, but it does represent a challenge for Islamic discourse to try to identify and examine the necessary requirements and then turn them into practical and affordable goals, at least on the long run.

The question may seem unrealistic and introduced in a context where the Islamic world lacks the necessary strength to be able to form such a powerful, international bloc. In fact, at the moment, the Islamic countries are experiencing a series of internal pressures and problems for which no prospects of solution in the near future are apparent. However, when considering the historical context, the situation is apparently temporary, but a bit unpromising.

In their foreign policy and strategic planning, the successive U.S. administrations look at the Islamic world as one geographical, cultural and geopolitical unity; although from the practical point of view, they deal with them on separate bases. So, we must hold onto the belief that our Islamic world is a single, integral entity, both on the cultural and political levels. This is the original and natural status, regardless of the "temporary" adverse conditions of the Islamic world. The current events in Iraq, Iran, Turkey, Syria, the Arabian Gulf area and Africa can only be understood in view of this critical and revealing strategy.

The "geographical concept" of the Islamic world has been well-established since the Umayyad era, and it has not been changed by the subsequent expansions. The Islamic world has at its heart the Arab world, followed, on a broader scope, by Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Turkey.

Today, the Islamic Conference Organization has 56 Islamic member states. There are large Muslim communities in non-Islamic countries such as India and many other countries in Africa, Europe and the two Americas. In the Muslim societies, Islam has a dynamic influence on behavior and values, along with a formative and psychological dimension. Religious trends were the main factor in the motivation of most of the nationalliberation movements of the Muslim people.

In the 1970s, there began an ideological wave of returning to religion and a decline in nationalistic and socialist ideologies. The societies and human relations were being re-formed, a process in which Islam was the keystone. The Islamic movements increasingly participated in the parliamentary, municipal and trade union activities, providing influence andleadership to most of the public and voluntary activities.

Moreover, the Islamic movement represented the backbone of resistance to occupation in Palestine, Afghanistan and Lebanon and of independence or self-defense actions in Kashmir, Central Asia, Russia, Philippines, Burma and other places.

New Islamic organizations were created with strategic and ideological frameworks of the Islamic world, such as the Islamic Conference Organization. Serving as a universal organization, it manages and cooperates with specialized Islamic organizations, including the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO); the Muslim World League (MWL); the Islamic Broadcasting Organization (ISBO); and the Islamic Development Bank (IDB).

At the same time, the cultural unity of the Islamic world does not prevent racial and ethnic pluralism. Unfortunately, Western imperialism works to create, encourage and capitalize on national and ethnic clashes.

This is evident in the Western writings themselves; we can cite *Political Geography: World-Economy, National States and Locality*, co-authored by Peter Taylor and Colin Flint.

A political-economic review of the Islamic economic figures and statistics will reveal considerable dependence on the West and poor economic coordination and cooperation among the Islamic states. Another equally important problem for the Islamic world is the divergence of foreign policy and political systems. Islamic states adopt discrepant policies and approaches which intensify disunity between them.

Summarizing, the Islamic world already has a great potential to become an economic and political world power. All that it needs is to have political determination and rationally manage its resources and capabilities. It has no need for extra military or technological power, nor has it to engage in military or political wars and risks.

The Islamic world covers three continents of the world whose "geopolitical" importance is far greater than that of any other world entity such as USA, Russia, China, France, Germany or the European Union. The population of the Islamic world is approximately 1,300,000,000 persons, with very large Islamic communities in Africa, Asia, Europe and the two Americas.

The Islamic world has more natural resources than any of its counterparts. It enjoys an impressive history and civilization as well as very rich ethnic and cultural diversity. Its social and individual dynamism makes it have a high potential to develop. Islam provides exceptional spiritual energy that unites and motivates Muslims to advance. The Islamic culture is one that stimulates learning and productivity.

Any future revival of the Islamic world will certainly be rapid, by virtue of its intrinsic capabilities and energies, but the problem is still the initiation and willpower. This can only be possible when we successfully get rid of the upper hand of the imperialist powers, which are aware, perhaps more than Muslims themselves, of our potential energies and opportunities.

3. From Absoluteness to Relativism

Recently, relativity has been transferred from physics to philosophy and life in general. Has it changed our understanding and interpretation of religious texts or our religious thought?

Science is no longer based on fixed facts, as it was before Einstein's theory of relativity. Today's informatics-featured knowledge and technology have become more focused on probabilities. The modern philosophical doctrines do not seek absolute truths and perceptions, since they do not exist in the world of mankind. Indeed, Allah is the Absolute Truth and Justice; human beings just attempt to get as close as they can to the truth and justice, but they can never reach an ultimate state. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿... ***As for those who believe, it has increased their Faith...***﴾ [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 124]

Accordingly, there is no limit to faith and its perfection is out of a person's reach. All that one needs to do is to keep an eye on and promote his faith.

Relativity can enhance both thought and practice and it probably goes in line with the essence of faith. Being a continuous process of investigation and evaluation, it involves a permanent belief that there are more possibilities to scrutinize and higher levels to pursue. Absolute truth and justice pertain to Allah Alone, and no one else can claim possession of them. To claim absolute truth and an infallible opinion is something contradictory to faith. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿... ***And you (i.e. mankind) have not been given of knowledge but a little.***﴾ [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 85]

The Prophet (PBUH) said: «... *Some of you might be more persuasive in their arguments than others, so I might judge in his favor (according to what I hear)...* »[1]

This *Hadîth* indicates that even the Prophet (PBUH) might judge in favor of a person not deserving such a judgment because his argument was powerful, while depriving another of his right because his argument was not

(1) Related by Muslim.

evident. Therefore, truth and justice in relation to human endeavor are two targets which are sought and used as norms by people.

One may be more distant from or close to them, but he can never hit them on the buttom. In fact, this serves a great wisdom: When review and improvement are iterative, efforts will accumulate, creating a new state that keeps being improved to reach even a better state, and so on. It is an endless circle termed by Dr. Sayyid Dusûqî as an accumulation-consolidation-creativity process.

4. From the Islamic State to the Muslim State

Many Islamic movements adopt the establishment of the Islamic state as a main goal for their struggle. The Islamic political discourse seems to have been largely concerned with the value of this slogan and the evaluation of the attempts to implement it, but it does not pay attention to more basic questions such as: What is the Islamic State? Is it actually existent in the Islamic world or not? Or does its presence vary from one country to another in how it is applied, conceptualized and in its relation to other countries?

What do we mean by the Islamic State? The Islamic Conference Organization has 56 "Islamic" member states. They are actually existent and they recognize themselves as being "Islamic". Their national constitutions expressly stipulate that Islam is the state religion and a main source of legislation. The state of pertaining (or not pertaining) to Islam is not attributable to bodies or governments; descriptions of belief and disbelief in Islam relate only to individuals. Hence, the recent wave of using the word "Islamic" as part of the names of states, groups and even businesses and hospitals does not entail others' being non-Muslim.

Many politicians argue in favor of using the concept of Muslim, rather than Islamic, political thought. This is based on the fact that Muslims choose their own techniques of government and administration. Such techniques may be in compliance with the Islamic teachings or not. However, this does not mean that their practices represent Islam itself, and any mistakes they make do not mean that they are not Muslims.

Practically, the Islamic states exist, and to talk about working to establish them would be an attempt to reinvent the wheel.

On the other hand, this does not mean that the efforts of the Islamic societies and movements to establish an Islamic state are judged to be imaginary or vain. They are, for the most part, attempts to implement the Islamic *Sharî'ah* and become more adherent to Islam. The aim, then, is to apply the Islamic *Sharî'ah* in every aspect of our lives.

The existing Islamic states do apply the Islamic *Sharî'ah* as the source of legislation, except for certain cases varying from one country to another. It does not render a state or government non-Islamic if its officials do not enforce some Islamic rulings, unless this is caused by a belief or act that implies express disbelief. It has never happened (and will never happen) since the death of the Prophet (PBUH) that the Islamic *Sharî'ah* was applied perfectly and completely. This is because the understanding and application of the Islamic *Sharî'ah* involve a lot of *Ijtihâd* (i.e. legal reasoning and discretion) which, due to its nature, is liable to error and deficiency. This is evident in the disagreements among the *Fiqh* scholars, rulers and *Fiqhî* and ideological schools.

Consequently, we find diverse models of the Islamic State over history and geography. In our age, there are Saudi Arabia, Iran, Sudan and Turkey (the experiences of the Welfare Party and the Justice and Development Party), in addition to the traditional model of the Islamic states such as Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan, Indonesia and other Islamic states.

Some people may go too far and use Qur'anic Verses and the *Sunnah* to derive government-related judgments which are inconsistent with the consensus of the Muslim nation. For example, Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***... And for those who do not judge by what Allah has revealed, they are disbelievers.***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 44]

Allah also says:

﴿***Then is it the judgment of (the time of) ignorance they desire? And who is better than Allah in judgment for a people who are firm (in faith).***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 50]

Based on their interpretation of these two verses, some people judge the existing governments (and even societies) to be disbelievers because they do not judge by what Allah has revealed. In fact, this is a hasty conclusion that does not consider the linguistic meaning of the word "judgment" and its meaning in the two verses, nor is it in harmony with the understanding which has been firmly adopted by the nation throughout its history. Judgment and "ignorance" are issues not restricted to government and politics, but they involve all deeds and sayings. Accusing someone of disbelief is regulated by fixed rulings and conditions.

Deeming the current Islamic systems of government as disbelievers is too severe, ill-founded and wrongful. Are they like Israel, for example? Is nonobservance of any Islamic ruling considered disbelief? If so, then all

the governments that have come to power since the death of the Prophet (PBUH) would be disbelievers! No one can observe each and every ruling revealed by Allah. Perfection is something that cannot be achieved; "to err is human" as the saying goes. Judgment also involves all practices in, for example, judiciary, administration and education. Would anyone who makes a mistake (e.g. in marking an exam paper, selecting employees, not treating one's children equally, etc.) or does not observe a *Shar'î* ruling be accused of disbelief? Such deeds, and many others, fall under "judgment". If the aforementioned verses are understood to be referring to governments, who would be accused of disbelief? The head of state or the prime minister? The parliamentary deputies or judges? All of them? Or does "judgment" involve all the government's officials, including even the *Imâms* and muezzins of the mosques?!

The question remains an issue and is justifiable, regardless of the above discussion: Can the Islamic *Sharî'ah* be applied under the contemporary systems of government and administration? Does the Islamic system agree, or disagree, with the modern concepts of the state and human rights?

The Islamic system is not a body of ready-made principles which are simply put into effect. Rather, it is a set of fundamental rules, purposes and doctrines which Muslims seek to apply. So, the Islamic models of government vary widely. At one extreme, some are highly successful in protecting public freedom and rights; at the other, some are known for their injustice and despotism. Besides all this, no one can deem any of such systems to be non- Muslim. It makes good sense to cite Ibnul-Qayyim's book, "*At-Turuq Al-Hukmiyyah Fî As-Siyâsah Ash-Shar'iyyah*" (Ways of Governing in *Shar'î* Politics). Maintaining that the *Shar'î* policy is focused on justice, even if not stated by the Heavenly Revelation, he explained that Allah sent His Messengers and Scriptures so that people may keep up justice, upon which the heavens and the earth were established. Wherever the signs of the truth are found by any means, they will be in accord with Allah's *Sharî'ah* and religion. Ibnul-Qayyim defined politics as "any action with which people become closer to well-being and farther from wickedness, even if it is not put forth by a prophet nor revealed by Allah. Any way through which justice is realized will belong to religion (i.e. Islam)".

It is interesting that the Muslim Brotherhood organization (founded by Hasan Al-Bannâ in 1928 and later becoming the largest Islamic organization in the Arab world, the origin for many other Islamic movements and the main

factor influencing the Islamic action) has never held the establish ment of the Islamic State as one of its main objectives. The organization's Charter, approved in 1948, stipulates that "the Muslim Brotherhood is a transnational Islamic group working to enforce the Islamic teachings and purposes, through: Introducing and explaining the message of the Glorious Qur'ân in line with the mainstream of modern times; uniting people on the Qur'anic principles; reconciling different points of views of Islamic groups; augmenting, protecting and liberating national wealth; targeting higher standards of living; pursuing social justice; providing social security to every citizen; contributing to public service; fighting poverty, ignorance and disease; encouraging charitable projects and activities; seeking the establishment of a "virtuous nation"; supporting international cooperation; enhancing peace and human civilization; and liberating the Nile Valley, the Arab countries and the Islamic nation from any form of foreign control."

To that end, the Muslim Brotherhood claims to adopt the means of *Da'wah* (newspapers, magazines, radio, television, etc.) and education as the movement's mechanisms for action; outline suggestions in different societal issues and provide consultancy to the parliamentary, executive and international bodies; and work to establish economic, social, scientific, public health and charitable organizations.

This reformative methodology was a thoughtful choice by the organization. The "formal" Charter did not mention the "Islamic State", but rather the " virtuous nation". Al-Bannâ did not choose to engage in political party activity, though legally acceptable, nor did he seek a majority in the parliament. His participation in the parliamentary elections was only symbolic. Announcing officially his candidacy in 1942, Al-Bannâ withdrew after an agreement with the ruling Wafd Nationalist Party in return for extra gains in public activity. No other members of the Muslim Brotherhood participated in parliamentary elections, although they had the opportunity to enjoy large-scale political participation, win parliamentary seats and be in government, whether individually or within a coalition. Al-Bannâ did not choose to establish a political party in the same line as the then political parties, such as the Wafd Nationalist Party and the Liberal Constitutional Party.

In fact, the personally chosen withdrawal from political party activity was based on Al-Bannâ's perception of the mission of the Muslim Brotherhood. For him, the organization was not a political party which sought to come to power, but it was a movement endeavoring to reform and

change the existing institutions and conditions, so that the whole society would be responsible for the state and its policies. In other words, the responsibility for enforcing the Islamic *Sharî'ah* and securing public interests would be the mission of all the members of the society in general and not just party- or group-specific programs. Stepping aside from daily practice and contention for gains, the organization took the opportunity to have a different view so as to be able to monitor and to enjoy credibility and detachment. The Muslim Brotherhood was to provide arbitration and reference for politicians etc. through its good relations with all groups and activists. With this neutralism, it was better able to conciliate, reform, enhance decision-making and disseminate the Islamic system. Therefore, Al-Bannâ certainly believed that the Islamic State was already existent but it only needed reform. Otherwise, why did he not attempt to come to power or make radical changes in the regime?

Interestingly, the 2002 Arab Human Development Report used the same expression as the movement's Charter; i.e. "virtuous nation". The report deemed this concept a key for development and reform.

Ultimately, the point is that Muslims attempt to establish their modern state and internal systems as they see just and beneficial, and select the government and management tools likely to make this possible. In these attempts, they may succeed or fail and they will vary in the degree of success and failure.

5. From Groups to Societies:

Today, there are a lot of indications that reform and public concerns can readily be transferred from the Islamic elite to the general public. For example, it appears that the number of mosque attendants are becoming higher and higher. This increasing attendance at times of prayer and ermons has not been arranged by some activist group, as was the case twenty years ago when Islamic activity began to grow. The special attention currently paid to mosques is rather a societal trend, just like the journeys to perform Hajj (i.e. Pilgrimage to Mecca) and *'Umrah* (i.e. Lesser Pilgrimage), the women's decent dress and *Hijâb* (i.e. veil), the cassette tapes of sermons, the religious TV programs, etc. All of these trends were initially elitist (run under the auspices of Islamic organizations), but now they are the mainstream of the society.

The Islamic revival has extended to countries and regions where there are no Islamic organizations, and influenced social groups not usually engaged in Islamic activity. Moreover, there have emerged Islamic banks and businesses not related to governments or organizations, but have basically been stimulated by the popular willingness to apply the Islamic *Sharī'ah.*

Age of Societies

In the last few years, there have occurred dramatic changes, challenges and opportunities. In addition to the necessity of creating powerful societies which can preserve a balance and protect democracy and citizens' social rights, these changes are of utmost importance concerning such basic needs and rights such as education, health and social care, work, accommodation for and participation in the national culture.

Among the most important developments is the change of the role of the state. Many public services formerly provided by the state (e.g. education, public health, communications, the post, water and power supply, public fund management, etc.) are being relegated to private businesses. Seeking revenues, these businesses provide services only for those who can pay for them. As a result, they devastate many social and welfare institutions and benefits, particularly for such special groups as the elderly, the disabled, the poor and the disadvantaged.

At the same time, the global advancement in technology and informatics gives societies, particularly the middle class, new opportunities to take action and develop.

There have been brought into effect new instruments of understanding and governing societies other than heavy-handedness, elitism and neutralization. The recent emergence of the freedom of information, as well as the developing media and propagation systems, has made this world a very different place to live in.

Most importantly, this wave has not been generated by virtue of the United States, which rather tries to understand and make use of it. The current exaggerated debate about the issue of reform and whether or not it is a "Western product" is well exploited by the political authorities, which have the status quo in their favor and seek to evade this forthcoming wave.

The societies and reform groups can anticipate losses but they can turn them into benefits if they start immediately with informative questioning and keeping in touch with the moment. The new transformation involves all parts of the world.

Social Justice: New Solutions and Ideas

Social dynamism and change relate to a set of questions about freedom, reform and social democracy. These issues create a partnership with, or sometimes replace, the official authorities in providing the services relinquished by the state. They can transform democracy and freedom into a social commitment; one that is in the interest of the society and regulates the state-citizen relationship, so that democracy and reform become inherent rights rather than gifts bestowed by the higher authorities and elites.

How will the societies address their affairs in the future when there are no ministries of culture, information, education, agriculture, public health and other services? How will the populations handle the cultural work in the absence of a Ministry of Culture, administer farms and their harvests in the absence of a Ministry of Agriculture, and take care of schools and higher education when it is provided by profit-seeking businesses? There are dozens of questions related to large-scale interests which the societies should be prepared to organize without governmental support.

How to perpetuate reform? How to protect democracy against the governments' varying doctrines and goals? How to make it a "social contract" egulating relationships and governing both citizens and the state? Social justice is the answer given by the societies in the face of the cruel economic globalization and the alliance of the state, which controls national resources and services, with private businesses and in their pursuit of freedom and reform.

Towards Social Democracy

Social democracy means enabling the societies to organize themselves and manage their basic resources, rights and needs. It gives them an opportunity to influence and participate in government in a way that broadens their political, economic and social options and makes the policymaking bodies trustworthy and efficient when dealing with the "power of proxy" granted to them by citizens to allocate the public resources and taxes in accordance with the interests and aspirations of the public. Finally, it helps strike a balance between the authorities and the general public and enforce various levels of institutional accountability.

In the Third World, democracy is still 'superior", being held exclusively by the political leaders. It is not a social contract that regulates the interests and commitments of governments, groups and individuals. In other words, the third-world democracy is just a matter of utilitarianism;

it is fully controlled, manipulated and, when necessary, suppressed by the political authorities.

The present authority-general public crisis is caused by the governments ignoring the role of public communities and the middle class which, in the last decades, have been weakened by the political and economic shifts as well as the upper hand of the government and the stranger emerging classes. Currently, there seems to be no solid programs to reactivate and empower the weakened classes.

If democracy and reform are to be substantiated, they need to be linked to people's demands and rights, including employment, education, residence, social participation, wages and taxes, professional development, worker issues and assemblies, cooperative projects and investments, public interest, social arrangements in the face of business corporations and governments, etc.

Reform is created by a social system of relationships and interests, and democracy can only flourish in a society that acts upon its direct practical goals. In such a society, the elections and legislations should reflect the firmly established interests and culture of the society.

The societal uprising occurring now in several countries reflects the concerns to build national projects which protect the interests of the general public and lay the foundation for a national culture that considers the developmental needs and the major changes of the time. This culture can change the nature of public and governmental roles, and create a new, expanding role of the society and culture in the reformative and developmental processes, which are no longer exclusive, personal visions of the elite, but rather a worldwide trend The societies need to organize themselves in a way that enables them to face the corporations which control their basic needs. When the government facilitates the possession, management and investment of the country's infrastructure to investors, the society will need to take action, exert pressure on the private corporations to protect its rights, and enact fair legislations for labor wages, health care, social security, mechanisms of complaint and standards of safety.

Moreover, the societies need to prompt the governments to redirect the expenditure and resources (taxes, etc.) towards improving the living conditions of the poor. For example, if the general expenditure is 25% of the gross national product of a country where the poor represent 20% of the population and receive 5% of GNP (these figures are real; the UN Human

Development Report revealed that the greatest portion of the national funds are allocated mainly to the upper class), then, re-allotting about 10% of the budget to the lower class can increase its income by 50%.

Statistics reveal that social justice and the fair distribution of income were achieved in most of the Western European countries by planning the general expenditure in order to provide different social groups with their basic needs, such as housing, education, health care and social security. These countries spend 40%-50% of the general expenditure on these basic needs.

On the other hand, the first victim of the reduction of funds in the Arab countries is always the funds allocated for development. The governments avoid upsetting the rich and influential classes, and they use stern measures only with the unprotected groups such as farmers, workers and small investors. For example, the labor unions of agriculture, transportation and handicrafts are just formal organizations which are unable to provide social or professional services to their members. Surveys show that a large percentage of trade unionists do not enjoy social or health insurance and work under very bad conditions while their trade unions hardly protect any rights they deserve, even minor ones.

In reality, it is a dynamic and powerful society that cares for the general public, whose mobility is disciplined by a large middle class, not by ineffective isolated parties and elites; such a society can deal successfully with globalization and the changing role of the state.

Societies versus Governments and Corporations

The spread of education and technology have created large middle classes which can build infrastructures for government and management dedicated to enforce change and pursue the society's goals and priorities.

However, what the middle class actually needs is to form societal, not organizational or party, networks serving to realize the long-term and short-term national goals. The confrontations occurring between our societies and Euro-American globalization demonstrate their ability to reorganize themselves into network systems including millions of individuals and groups, rather than hierarchical ones controlled by leaders and organizations.

There are many cosmopolitan organizations designed to defend the rights of the working classes. They have millions of members all over the world and work against the influence of the imperialist bodies (such as the World Trade

Organization and transnational corporations) which negatively affect the living standards of the ordinary professionals.

The new world market is based on "social Darwinism", an ideology that has no regard for the lower classes or the interests of the public. Modern economics is no more than an immoral process governed only by the law of the jungle. This phenomenon threatens all parts of the world, including the Western societies which advocate globalization and the methods of the market. The systems of welfare, social security, retirement programs, health insurance, public savings and small- and medium-size firms in Europe and the United States are almost as endangered as the Third World.

In opposition to the capitalist globalization designed for domination, consumerism and appropriation, there has emerged a counter-network of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). In this context, approximately 2,50,000 protesters (representing 1,000 popular associations and trade unions from 82 countries) demonstrated against the 8G summit held in Genoa (Italy), 2001. Also, more than 6,00,000 people demonstrated against the World Social Forum held in Brazil, 2002. They had representatives from the five continents and were organized by 2,000 NGOs and trade unions.

The new international community consists of several levels of professional and women associations; local community fraternities such as the Native American activists; and advocacy groups and NGOs such as ATTAC (Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Aid of Citizens), Jubilee 2000 (a coalition movement that called for the cancellation of the third-world debt by the year 2000), the Third World Network (a nonprofit international network of organizations and individuals involved in issues relating to development, Third World and North-South Affairs), and Amnesty International (a nonpartisan organization dedicated to securing fair and prompt trials for prisoners and the abolition of the death penalty and torture).

The problems of poverty and lack of social justice do not result from privatization, but rather from the authority-capitalist alliance which creates a set of economic policies and legislations which have disastrous effects on the poorer communities, depleting the society's energies in favor of a small elite.

To better this situation, the societies are not attempting to restore their former condition in 1970s and 1980s, i.e. the concept of the "welfare state" or the state as the highest employer in the society. Instead, they are pursuing a new societal role that secures a balance with the state and corporations

mainly serving the middle classes. If the government makes it possible for capitalists to take possession of the national infrastructures while preventing social groups from taking action and defending their rights and interests, and when the government enacts labor laws in favor of employers while ignoring the rights of workers, then it will be helping the companies fleece the society members and deprive them of their due rights. It is a true fact that some Arab governments try to attract investment through certain measures such as restricting trade unionism; not enforcing an act for minimum wage; and giving little care to social security, health insurance, standards of safety and mechanisms of complaint.

The state is just a modern entity, and the society is far older and more deep-rooted. The concept of the state today is highly challenged and requires in-depth reconsideration of its role and existence. This rapidly changing world is introducing major questions about "cessation": The cessation of history, the cessation of professions, the cessation of the state, etc.

The cessation-of-matters clutter is a worldwide obsession. It seems worryingly possible, since the cessation of historical eras often cause gloom and doom. The current transition between two eras imposes life and death questions which the societies and states should painstakingly address to decide on their far-reaching interests.

6- From Islamism to Islam:

In their beginnings, the Islamic movements were marginal within the society, and then they developed and became influential. They often included middle-class and urban activists and did not have a significant presence among landowners and capitalists. In the Indian subcontinent, the Islamic movement began within the middle class with an elitist orientation, which kept its popular influence always limited. It is when the new wave of violent and extremist groups spread among the poor and uneducated youths that new models of behavior and religiosity emerged.

Subsequently, the Islamic movement came to power in Iran, Sudan and Turkey, while it was unable to do the same in other countries, though its popularity was increasing. Some degree of Islamic participation in the government was achieved in Jordan, Algeria, Turkey, Yemen, Kuwait, Malaysia, Pakistan and Sudan during the 1970s and 1980s. The Islamic movements won parliamentary seats in Egypt, Lebanon, Algeria and Syria in the 1950s and 1960s. However, Islamic groups had no more influence on the government than this.

Paradoxically, the Islamic movement came into existence in reaction to a crisis that it sought to overcome, but instead of solving the problem it rather created another crisis because of its inability to stabilize the situation. In fact, this failure is the responsibility of the whole Islamic nation.

The Islamic movements reflect the reality of their societies, partly because they are the product of the influence of modernity on the societies as well as an expression of their underlying social structures. These movements have ideological and historical roots, derived from dogmatic concepts in Islam and belonging to the heritage of historical ideologies, which still have recognition and influence. The phenomenon relates to the societies concerned because they are influenced by the Islamic Creed, not because they suffer occasional problems. The crises experienced by the Islamic movements could not exterminate them, unlike the Fascist and Communist movements which, when they faced critical problems, could not stand firm and came to an utter and conclusive end. Even in the Muslim countries where these Islamic movements are less powerful, the authorities behave as if these movements are the dominant powers while the governments are the leaders of the Opposition which strive to liberate themselves from the grip of these movements. Therefore, the crisis is general, including both the secular regimes, which claim adherence to the Islamic *Sharî'ah*, as well as the Islamic movements.

The future of the Islamic nation apparently lies outside the scope of the presence of the Islamic groups, whether moderate (which did their part and are no longer able to cope with the Islamic and societal changes) or extremist (which are mercilessly targeted and suppressed by the political systems).

With this in mind, Islam will remain present, shaping the societies and their futures. Religion has always been, as indicated by Hasan Hanafi (Political Islamism; between Thought and Practice, 2002), an instrument of social, political and cultural change and it caters for social movements in favor of the oppressed and marginalized social groups against domineering powers. Religion was used as a means of national liberation (e.g. liberating the Jews from the persecution of *Fir'awn*; i.e. Pharaoh) and of reconciliation (i.e. settling the ancient tribal disputes in the Arabian Peninsula). Therefore, to say that religion has nothing to do with politics is a claim propagated by the political systems in order to do whatever they like for the benefit of the privileged groups, away from the control of the law and religion.

Historically, the political conditions affected the emergence of different Islamic sciences such as Islamic Theology, Fundamentals of *Fiqh*, Sciences of *Hadîth*, Interpretation of the Qur'ân, Study of the Prophetic Biography, etc. In modern times, politics is evident in the Islamic writings, including The *Life of Muhammad* by Muhammad Husayn Haykal, *On the Margins of the Prophet's Biography* by Tâhâ Husayn, and many other remarkable books.

Furthermore, religious reform was stimulated for political reasons related to the decline of the Ottoman Caliphate as well as the fragmentation, occupation and backwardness of the Islamic world. Political Islamism was initialized by Jamâlud-Dîn Al-Afghânî, the pioneer of Islamic activity. He was the first to use Islam to confront the occupation and oppression of Muslim countries. He is the one who introduced the call for "the Unity of the Nile Valley" and the integral relationship between Egypt and Sudan.

Muhammad `Abduh and Rashîd Ridâ (Egypt), `Abdur-Rahmân Al- Kawâkibî (Syria), Muhammad Bil-Hasan Bil-Ahjawî and `Allâl Al-Fâsî (Morocco), `Abdul-Hamîd Ibn Bâdîs and Mâlik Ibn Nabî (Algeria), and At-Tâhir `Âshûr (Tunisia) represent the class of intellectuals with similar leanings. Contributions were made by political-religious orders like the Sanussi (Libya), the Mahadist Movement (Sudan), the Murids (Caucasia) and the Nurasi Group (Turkey).

The national liberation movement in Egypt, from the time of Muhammad `Abduh and Mustafâ Kâmil, was associated with political Islamism and religious reform. The same applied to Morocco (`Allâl Al-Fâsî, the founder of the Independence Party), Algeria (Mâlik Ibn Nabî and Ibn Bâdîs), Tunisia (Al-Fâdil, At-Tâhir Ibn `Îshûr and Ath-Tha`âlibî), Libya (the Sanussi movement and `Umar Al-Mukhtâr), Syria (`Abdur-Rahmân Al-Kawâkibî), Sudan (the Mahdist movement), and Palestine (Al-Qassâm, Al-Husaynî, Hamas and the Islamic Jihad Movement). Hasan Al-Bannâ, the student of Muhammad Rashîd Ridâ, founded the Muslim Brotherhood Movement, which later became the strongest Islamic organization in the Arab world. It worked actively in politics; participated in the 1948 Arab- Israeli war; and resisted occupation, feudalism and despotism.

`Abdul-Ilâh Bilqazîz pointed out that Islam proves powerful in the social and political lives of the Arab societies, serving as a major determinant of their general structure and a generator of their new dynamics. In the last three decades, politics was no longer able to express itself without referring to religion, not only for those who combine the two

(such as the Islamists), but also for those who always keep them separate in order to fulfill their long-term political gains.

The formation of modern Arab states in the historical times of occupation and their subsequent experiences of independence laid the foundations for a clear separation between religion and politics. There came to power successive regimes with Western ideological backgrounds. Social, political and cultural modernity gained more and more ground within the contemporary Arab community. This affected the social norms and values, creating an overwhelming, universal trend towards materialism.

At some point, however, modernity fell unexpectedly against tradition. Though prevalent, the wave of modernity and secularism could not vanquish the deep-rooted facts and components of the Arab culture, for which the religious background is a top priority.

Political activity has always been crucial in Islam and not something contrived by the contemporary Islamic movements. Over the Islamic history, politics and religion have been strongly correlated. The factors of religion and patriotism together created a general political sentiment. Of course, the absence of political freedom will lead to the exploitation of religion in conflicts or when looking for alternative areas for action.

Islam is, by definition, a creed, social system and culture, while the Islamic movements are just political organizations which do not contribute to Islamic knowledge. They do not introduce themselves as discrete ideological doctrines, but rather as political trends. Their intellectual contributions are too meager to be compared with those of the Islamic reformative movements in the 20th century.

However, this does not mean we should overlook the achievements and painstaking efforts of the contemporary Islamic movements. They have done their best to preserve the nation's Islamic identity, liberate it from occupation and counteract persecution and appropriation. They represent a major political power in the Arab societies that helps keep the internal conflicting relations between the society and the official authority in balance.

The Islamic movement gives the national, political and reformative areas a religious dimension that invigorates and mobilizes the nation's energies. It breaks the monopoly practiced by the political authorities over religion, making it wide open to the public. It restores the nation to return to the social and liberal functions of Islam to help the disadvantaged and suppressed populations against deprivation and tyranny.

Furthermore, the Islamists enjoy tremendous success in different parliamentary, trade union and municipal elections in the Arab societies. The Islamic influence has become a comprehensive phenomenon that involves the governments, communities, institutions, businesses, education, political activity and other aspects of life in the Islamic countries.

Of course, the disappearance of the existing Islamic movements, if this is possible at all, will not take place all at once. They will get less and less popular, turning gradually into a legacy or part of history, just as the present generation looks at the leftist and nationalist movements of the past. Therefore, paying attention to the future of the Islamic movement is both reasonable and necessary.

The question of the Islamic movement is almost the most important point when thinking about the future of the Arab-Islamic countries. It has even become more critical after the September 11 attacks. In spite of the apparent trend towards eliminating the Islamic movement from social life, it is the Islamic movement that actually has the edge over the governments, not the opposite. It acquires noticeable presence within the society and contributes effectively to its present and future course of action. What the governments are doing is just delaying the confrontation with, rather than finding solutions for the real problems of the society.

In the end of this paper, we will cite an important study on the future of the Islamic movement, published by the Emirate Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ECSSR). It included contributions from several researchers such as Radwân As-Sayyid, Fawwâz Girgis and Ahmad Al-Mawsilî, and highlighted specific important points such as:

- **Legitimacy or Illegitimacy:** The relationship between political regimes and Islamic movements falls under one of four types: (1) The first is parliamentary, in which the Islamic movements work legitimately as part of the political sphere or even as the Opposition (as in Lebanon); (2) another type allows the Islamic movement to work freely, as an intelligent way to preserve political and social stability (as in Jordan, Yemen and Kuwait); (3) the third one completely bans Islamic movements (as in several countries); and (4) the final type involves tensions and violent clashes.

Integrating the Islamic movement into a democratic political system or as an Opposition power is the only way to achieve political and social stability. Otherwise, the governments will be driving their countries to disorder and civil war.

- **Violence and Extremism:** Violence should be separated from extremism, which can be ideological and non-violent. Some degree of extremism may be necessary for more ideological discipline and effect on the lives of the people. On the other hand, a distinction should be made between violence as a temporary phenomenon related to special circumstances and violence as an ideology.

Many analysts attribute the roots of religious extremism to the thought of Sayyid Qutb, who deemed the whole society to be non-Muslim. These thoughts were used by a segment of youths as a way to express their dissatisfaction with reality and attempt to forcibly change it.

Despite the steady growth of the Islamic movement, the Arab-Islamic political map does not reflect this. Some political systems ignore and marginalize the Islamic movements, which results in mutual violence and instability.

If the Islamic movement's tendency towards moderation is real, this will depend on the political systems and societies, in addition to the Islamic movements themselves.

- **Relationship with Governing Systems:** Will the Arab political regimes proceed to settle their conflicts with the Islamic movements and cooperate with them in supporting national renaissance? Or will things remain the same political suppression, violation of human rights and denial of freedom?

The Islamic leaderships are trying hard to redesign Islamism upon new foundations of peaceful political participation and non-violence, and to substantiate a *Fiqhī* and theoretical ideology of political pluralism.

However, the existing political regimes do not seem to have any longterm strategic vision that allows for these new facts and they build their approaches only on the policy of confrontation. But, do the Islamic movements have a real developmental project different from the currently proposed programs?

The national reactions in opposition to globalization and its economic organizations, as well as the events occurring in Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon and Egypt, demonstrate a new, growing role of societies involving political reform and confrontation of the authority; this role involves more than the role of the traditional elites and political parties. The parliamentary and municipal elections taking place in several Arab countries have made it clear that the political parties are waning in popularity and have less influence.

Contemporary Islamic Discourse
A Call for Evaluation and Reconsideration

Dr. Munâ Haddâd Yakan(*)

The underlying principle of Islam is that all races and colors are equal. Itpreserves human dignity against discrimination and enslavement. The current anti-aggression movements and human rights activists are actually pursuing these ideals. Thus, it is important to emphasize this principle and use it as the basis of public religious discourse.

Importance of Religious Discourse:

Religious discourse is quite different from other sorts of discourse. Whether divinely revealed or pagan, it is the oldest and perhaps the most influential discourse in history. It has always been an important element in the formation, culture and characteristics of nations, whether they are developed or not.

It is a discourse that, whenever it declines, it soon comes to life again. In fact, this is not restricted to a specific nation; it is a world wide phenomenon. Evidence of this can be found in many historical events. The downfall of the Soviet Union was accompanied by a quick return to religion (both Christianity and Islam), despite the long years of atheism which was imposed by the state.

(*) President of the University of Al-Jinan (Lebanon).

The geopolitical changes in the Arab region were accompanied by a great Islamic awakening. Even the recent American wars were started by using religious discourse. For example, the American president described his war against the Arab region as a Crusade. His aim was to arouse the Christian feelings among Westerners. The same applies to the Jewish (more accurately, Zionist) religious discourse. The world Zionist movement has exploited the Jewish religious discourse, as well as some Jewish-influenced Christian groups, causing the emergence of "Christian Zionism" which adopts the Jewish notions and predictions about the end of the world. Religious discourse was also brought into focus during the American war against Iraq, and it deeply influenced the American public opinion.

Given that religious discourse has such importance and weight, it makes perfect sense to pay adequate attention to it. Specifically, we will discuss the (Islamic) religious discourse with its emergent complexities and how the new Islamic discourse can solve them.

Exploration of the essence and components of religious discourse is a first step in the study of the complexity of Islamic discourse. Most of the difficulties that face researchers result from the fact that they scrutinize public discourse superficially without addressing its basic elements and factual circumstances. With this short-sighted technique, the issue stays unresolved or may even be aggravated to an extent that it cannot be contained.

Religion and Arab Religious Discourse

Indeed, religious discourse is different from religion itself. With its heavenly creed and legislation, religion is the perfect criterion by which all matters can be judged. At least, this is believed by all Muslims.

Religious discourse, on the other hand, involves throwing more light on some aspects of religion than others according to the appropriate needs. This sort of discourse may sometimes be derived from the general perception of religion or show excess on some points, which is a distortion of religion. In other cases, religious discourse may be directed by some local, national or international groups for their own interests. They use a religious mask that makes them able to influence the public greatly.

An example of this is the discourse of *Jihâd* (i.e. fighting in the way of Allah) in Afghanistan and Chechnya. It was skillfully planned and conducted after international agendas had taken place, and was used in a way that offended Islam itself. This can be demonstrated by looking at the subsequent period, when religious discourse changed from focusing on

Jihâd against the Soviets to justifying and complying with the new American occupation of Afghanistan.

Religious discourse, in this sense, exploits religion in some situations to achieve special aims.

In our Arab region, religious discourse and its value in the intellectual sphere can only be understood through the general circumstances that affect its formation.

Since the age of independence, Arab religious discourse has experienced several stages, including:

- Looking at Europe and the USA as imperialistic nations.
- Looking at Europe and the USA as developed countries that should be followed.
- Believing that development can be achieved by imitating the West.
- Believing that development can be achieved by returning to the Islamic heritage.

Arab religious discourse has several resources and references, whether official (*Fatwâ* agencies), social (Islamic movements) or cultural (intellectuals and scholars). Each of these has its own discourse, and they do not necessarily have to combine together.

Having experienced many ups and downs, there have been crucial milestones in the region's religious discourse. It has been extremely affected by the Palestinian question and the successive Israeli-Arab wars, which resulted in the dominance of an anti-Israel Arab nationalistic discourse. With the June 1967 Arab defeat, the religious discourse changed slightly. After the late Egyptian President Anwar As-Sâdât signed the Camp David Accord (1979), the official religious discourse fragmented into several conflicting discourses: one of *Jihâd* versus one of peace and normalization, which in turn was divided into a discourse of just and comprehensive peace versus a discourse of "accomplishedfact peace". This led to contrasting points of view: One point of view believed in the necessity of a commitment to Islam after other approaches had ended in failure (*Salaf*-related) [(1)]; one approach demanded an abandonment of our heritage and an adoption of an open-door policy towards the West; and another took a middle-of-the-road, compromising policy.

Despite this variety of approaches, each one includes more than one discourse. In fact, there is hardly one single religious discourse.

(1) Early Muslim scholars.

New Islamic Discourse against Western Provocation:

The role of the new Islamic discourse in solving the problems of religious discourse is a difficult and complex affair. It is too difficult to direct and frame religious discourse towards the right religious objectives. Real life is full of sensitive issues which provoke this discourse into action (whether its advocates are willing to do this or not).

The establishment of the state of Israel in Palestine and the continuous US support for it has led to the emergence of an extremely radical religious discourse. Although it has its own roots in reality, it is the foreign influences that have stimulated such a religious discourse. Undoubtedly, the tight American-Zionist relations and the obvious US discrimination account for such a discourse and its ramifications.

In support of this fact, Robert Crane, the former adviser to President Nixon and Director of the U.S National Security Council, maintained, "In fact, America is led by Zionism" [1]. The US officials believe that any use of power against Jewish or American interests is a terroristic action. For them, any one resisting Israel is a terrorist.

By the same token, to the congregation at the Good Shepherd Church in Sandy, Oregon on 21 June 2003, General William Boykin, the United States Deputy Undersecretary of Defence for Intelligence, stated, "And we ask ourselves this question, 'Why do they (Muslims and Arabs) hate us? Why do they hate us so much?'... The answer to this is because we are a Christian nation, because our foundation and our roots are Judeo- Christian... This means we have a commitment to Israel. This means it is a commitment we are never going to abandon."

Yet another example: In his speech, widely-covered-by-the-media, before the British troops in Iraq, Tony Blair, the British Prime Minister, accused the so-called "Islamic-extremism virus" of threatening international security.

This single-minded Western discourse caters for the creation of an opposite religious discourse; one that is a reaction to the Western action which occasionally makes use of Christianity, despite its claims of secularism.

(1) Robert Crane, Islam-Arab Discourse and Issues of the Time, 1st Edition, Syria, Fussilat for Studies, Translation and Publishing, 2000, p.79.

Undoubtedly, Arab religious discourse is in trouble. It has become highly exploited, or even fabricated, by some internal or external bodies to serve personal schemes.

Thereupon, it is very difficult to solve the problems of religious discourse, although a solution has to be found. How can modern Islamic discourse contribute to the solution?

Actually, modern Islamic discourse is still developing, but it is difficult to say that there is only one modern Islamic discourse; there may be more than one. However, they all have constant features that guarantee their success and continuity. In this context, it makes sense to examine other people's perceptions of the desired modern Islamic discourse. In Roger Garaudy's view, the future of Islamic discourse depends on "its efforts to reestablish all the factors that caused its past greatness and dominance:

1. A universal dimension: The old Islamic discourse was never restricted to mainstream or past traditions. Instead, it was open to all cultures, perceiving cooperation between the East and the West as the basis of interaction between all the Heavenly Religions.

2. An internal dimension: It stressed kindness and love for others.

3. A social dimension: It always rejected conflicts and any tendency to fulfifill personal interests at the cost of leaving others in distress." [1] This is the opinion of an important French thinker who was a theoretician and member of the French Communist Party and chose to embrace Islam. He is cited to show his perceptions of Islamic discourse and its future from a Western-socialist perspective.

In the same context, Robert Crane, an American thinker and former politician who embraced Islam and had his own Islamic discourse and future predictions, claimed, "I think we have to focus on creating an elevated understanding of the Islamic concepts, among youths in particular.

They have to understand the modern world and find Islamic solutions for the most urgent problems of society. Additionally, we have to develop an intellectual leadership among Muslims in every field of knowledge. In both matters, the goal is to sustain justice all over the world. This will make Islam an active power that is applicable to the West just as it is to the Islamic world." [2]

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(1) Roger Garaudy, ibid., p.67-68.
(2) Fârûq 'Abdul-Haqq, ibid., p.76.

Features and Obstacles of Modern Discourse

The desired modern Islamic discourse should be derived from religion itself, not in reaction to an outside influence; it should be objective and moderate and it should embody the real essence of Islam. Such a discourse may be eagerly pursued, but it cannot prevent or reduce other discourses. So, constituting a point of balance, it should be strongly supported, protected and provided with the appropriate environment.

The more Islamic discourse is closer to the essence of Islam and its grand issues, the more it will be able to resolve the complexities of religious discourse. It is an action depicting a renewed belief in the role of the Islamic message and its promulgation through a universal Islamic discourse. When Islam dominated the world in its old glorious days, it was based on a set of basics:

Universality for all people: Islamic discourse should return to being universal, being open to the whole world including the West, which is currently undergoing noticeable changes in its position towards Islam, despite the numerous media and other wars waged against it. This universal nature of Islamic discourse is a determinant that leads to its prevalence and continuity. This is a major fact in Islam that should be understood, especially in the current age and its tendency to remove all bounds. This is illustrated by the Qur'anic verse: ﴿***And We have not sent you (O Muhammad) but as a mercy for the worlds.***﴾ [Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets): 107]

Islamic discourse, with all its rhetorical, social and political aspects, was derived from a clear, rich source: the Holy Qur'ân and the Prophetic *Sunnah*, which together constitute an integrated unit that interacts with the dynamics of life and deals with its problems. The larger and more diverse the Islamic state becomes, the more there will be a need for an Islamic discourse that is able to influence people's views and achieve their hopes. In this context, Allah says: ﴿***O you who have believed! Respond to Allah (by obeying Him) and to the Messenger (i.e. Muhammad) when he calls you to that which will give you life...***﴾ [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 24]

Indeed, Allah is the Creator of human beings and He knows best what is good and bad for them. He, Glorified be He, says: ﴿***And by the soul and He who proportioned it. Then He inspired it (with discernment of) its wickedness and its righteousness.***﴾ [Ash-Shams (The Sun): 7, 8]

He also says: ﴿***Does He who has created not know, while He is the Most Kind, the All-Aware?***﴾ [Al-Mulk (The Kingdom): 14]

In fact, Islam is the most comprehensive Heavenly religion. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***But when 'Isâ (i.e. Jesus) felt (persistence in) disbelief from them, he said, "Who are my supporters for (the cause of)Allah?" Al-Hawâriyyûn (i.e. disciples) said, "We are supporters of Allah. We have believed in Allah and testify that we are Muslims (submitting to Him).***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 52]

Further, He says: ﴿***Truly, the religion in the sight of Allah is Islam.***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 19]

The Prophet (PBUH) said: «*The example of my case and that of the prophets before me is that of a man who has built a house completely and excellently except for the place of one brick. Then, people would enter it and wonder, 'But for the place of a brick (how splendid the house would be!)*»[1]

Unity of humankind: This approach should be emphasized in the Islamic discourse. In fact, this is the approach on which Islam is based, as it deems all races and colors equal and preserves the dignity of human beings from discrimination and enslavement. The present national liberation movements and human rights activists are eagerly pursuing the reestablishment of such ideals. Consequently, it is important to articulate this approach and use it in public discourse as the fifirst message of Islam. In this respect, Allah says:

﴿***O mankind! We have created you from a male and a female, and made you peoples and tribes, that you may know one another. Indeed, the most honorable of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is All-Knowing, All-Aware.***﴾ [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

One of the most important principles substantiated by Islam is concerned with partnership. All people are involved in some kind of partnership, whether they like it or not. Only Allah decides who is close to Him and who is not, and everyone will receive his recompense from Allah, Glorified be He. No one else has the right to judge and punish others for what is in their hearts.

This sublime principle can alleviate the fanaticism and extremism of those who establish themselves as defenders of the religion; a matter belonging only to Allah, Who has the upper hand over everything.

This constitutes the baseline component of a pluralistic society, where Allah does not allow anybody, even a Muslim, to oppress others or be autocratic. Even the Prophet (PBUH) was repeatedly addressed by Allah, the Almighty, by such verses as:

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(1) Related by At-Tirmidhi, 2789.

﴿*Not upon you (O Muhammad) is (the responsibility for) their guidance, but Allah guides whom He wills...*﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 272]

Allah also says:

﴿*Show forgiveness, enjoin what is good, and turn away from the ignorant (i.e. do not punish them).*﴾ [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 199]

These verses are clear demonstrations of the mission of the Prophet (PBUH) and the approach which Allah willed for His Prophet (PBUH). Allah says: ﴿*Indeed, you (O Muhammad) do not guide whom you like, but Allah guides whom He wills...*﴾ [Al-Qasas (The Narrative): 56]

Accordingly, it is necessary to admonish people in a way that is most benevolent and call to the way of Allah leniently and gently. In this sense, Allah says: ﴿*...And had you (O Muhammad) been severe and hardhearted, they would have broken away from around you...*﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 159]

Further, He says:

﴿*So remind (O Muhammad) - you are only a reminder. You are not over them a controller.*﴾ [Al-Ghâshiyah (The Enveloper): 21, 22]

Dialogue and accepting the other: This is one of the features of the Islamic civilization. It should be revived by the contemporary Islamic discourse. This feature has always attracted many people to Islam, though it has suffered oppression and injustice. On the other hand, Islam protects and respects all religious and racial minorities in the Muslim nations.

This is tangible evidence pointing to the acceptance of others and preservation of their identity in a context of mutual respect. Such a discourse prevails among those who love human life, not those who show injustice and enmity. In this regard, Allah says:

﴿*And do not argue with the People of the Scripture unless it be in a way that is best, except for those who commit injustice among them; and say, "We believe in that which has been revealed to us and revealed to you; our God and your God is one (i.e. Allah); and we are Muslims (in submission) to Him.*﴾ [Al-'Ankabût (The Spider): 46]

The problem is that they (the People of the Scripture) believe in and practice self centeredness while they allege to advocate pluralism, which is an inevitable law of the universe.

Our Islamic history contains great manifestations of pluralism. Islam has been the major reference in settling the most critical issues as effective and gentle discourse plays a crucial role in resolving many disputes.

Under this well-balanced discourse, non-Muslims feel that they are not threatened and that their well-being and freedom are protected.

Freedom: This is a deep-rooted aspect of Islamic discourse that needs to be reestablished. Ever since its advent, Islam has strongly advocated it. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***There shall be no compulsion in (the acceptance of) religion...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

Islam stresses the fact that all people are born free. This sense of freedom reigned many centuries under the Islamic state, creating an environment of creativity and growth for all religious, ethnic and national groups.

With its flexibility and open-mindedness, Islam prescribes that Muslim preachers should review their methods of *Da'wah* (i.e. dissemination of the Islamic teachings). This applies particularly to such immoderate preachers who use Islam as a cover for their malicious intentions, which has caused the Muslim nation a lot of harm. They are followed by many ignorant people who mistakenly think that the Islamic *Da'wah* is based on harshness and hegemony. In fact, this perception of the *Da'wah* was invented by them and was never sanctioned by Allah.

The Islamic Conquests of many countries made its underlying basis good words and deeds. No wonder the master, Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), summarized the whole religion using the word "tolerance". He (PBUH) said: «*The most beloved religion to Allah is (that of) the tolerant Hanîfiyyah (i.e. the upright religion).*»[1]

Renewal and keeping track of scientific development: This brings about good for nations, in all fifields and can be from any source. The Muslim state experienced many scientific achievements from which the world drew countless benefifits. Currently, Muslims still introduce invaluable contributions to the largest scientific research centers in the Western world itself. Islamic discourse adopts this trend by calling others to learn useful knowledge. The Prophet (PBUH) said: «*Seeking knowledge is a duty on every Muslim.*»[2]

He (PBUH) also said: «*The word of wisdom is the lost property of a believer. So wherever he finds it, he has a better right to it (than any one else).*»[3]

Hence, renewal and a scientific review are particularly needed in the present days when a severe campaign is ongoing both internally and externally against Islam. But, renewal of Islamic discourse does not mean

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî.
(2) Related by Ibn Mâjah, 220.
(3) Related by At-Tirmidhî, 2611.

renewal of Islam itself, since Islam is unchangeable. This notion was correctly understood by such notable modern reformers as Imâm Al-Ghazâlî, Ibn Taymiyyah, Al-Kawâkibî and Muhammad 'Abduh. These prominent fifigures found with Islamic *Da'wah*-related discourse a wide range of flexibility on which they capitalized to move to larger horizons.

Renewal of Islamic *Da'wah*-related discourse requires that we consider Islam again to fifind out its hidden values and potential. Put differently, Islam should be reread and understood more deeply, since forgetfulness (of the religion) causes Allah's wrath. Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿So, when they forgot (the warnings) that they had been reminded of, We opened to them the doors of every (pleasant) thing, until when they rejoiced in that which they were given, We seized them (in punishment) suddenly, and then they fell into despair.﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 44]

The wealths of this world are not the sole property of anyone: Being another principle of partnership among people, nobody, regardless of his power, is entitled to expel anyone from his land, since the whole world belongs to Allah and He only grants power and wealth to those He wills. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) demonstrated that partnership by his saying:

«Three (things) should not be denied (to be given to a person in need of them): Water, grass and fire.»[(1)]

This way, the productive capacity of the society will not be disabled, though there are many alternatives and approaches to deal with this issue.

Islamic Discourse and Free Dialogue:

It is necessary to look at the essence of Islamic literature, values and civilization, not to focus on old-fashioned rulings about which the great Imâms had different opinions, although such differences never led to quarrels. The well-founded ground which the perfect *Da'wah* should be based on has nothing to do with self-interest, propaganda, egocentricity, telling lies, arrogance or ignorance. From this resulted the intellectual richness of the Islamic civilization, being the product of the accumulation and exchange of thoughts and the interaction with other civilizations.

Therefore, pluralism is a factor leading to enrichment, as free dialogue is a factor leading to positive action and activation of intellectual potential.

Islam has been spread by virtue of its flexibility and dynamism, which has made it accessible for all religions, doctrines, sects, languages, cultures, peoples and kingdoms, even those which could not withstand its overwhelming

(1) Ibn Mâjah, 2464.

power, for example the Persian and Roman Empires. This was not achieved by military power alone, but other determinants played the greatest role: The power of the word, the power of the ideology and the power of persuasive discourse (which is missing in many callers of the *Da'wah* today).

Nevertheless, after the 9/11 attacks, there has risen among Muslim intellectuals an increasing feeling that the nation is being stabbed in the back. The absence of a realistic and constructive Islamic discourse has paved the way for the appearance of some ignorant groups who know only the language of bloodshed and destruction and vent their distresses wrongly. They plague Islam and shame Muslims, doing the enemies of the nation a great free-of-charge favor and even misguiding many youths. It is confusing whether to think well of them, on the basis that this is their actual ideology, or to think badly of them, in view of the grave harm they have caused to Islam and the Muslim community.

This is demonstrated by the Prophetic *Hadîth*: *«Allah will not deprive you of knowledge after he has given it to you, but it will be taken away through the death of religious learned men and so their knowledge. Then there will remain ignorant people who, when consulted, will give verdicts according to their opinions, whereby they will mislead others and go astray.»*[1]

By contrast, the justice and lucidity of Islamic discourse cannot be misleading or harmful. Many who are subservient to others have a spirit of fear and defeatism to the extent that they act as mouthpieces for the enemies of Islam. They offend the long-established texts, beliefs and history of the nation and they twist facts and propagandize malicious thoughts that contradict the dignity of the nation. The hallmark of such types of people is treachery and hypocrisy.

Reluctance to accept social diversity and free constructive discourse is not justifiable, unless a society is on the edge of an abyss. However, when a social system is built on strong foundations, it will provide the renewable discourse with all the requirements to live. All *Da'wah* activists, scholars and thinkers should proceed actively to create a new understanding of Islam; one that goes in line with the spirit of the age, the development of the techniques of *Da'wah*, and make use of human and technological potential. They should seek to communicate the message of Islam as purely as possible and to encounter the malicious weaklings and pretenders, so that they may not spread corruption and evil all over the Islamic world.

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, 6763.

Conclusion

The above mentioned headlines of Islamic discourse bring it into focus and make it an active, successful and comprehensive discourse. "It is the right, yet difficult, choice: To be part of the present civilization, without losing our cultural identity and developmental exceptionalism. It is a matter of how to enhance specialties while preserving the overall picture of the world; to live our time and dominate it with the power of the mind." (1)

This optimized Islamic discourse is essential, since the other possible choice is inferiority and backwardness under the ongoing cultural invasion, which foreshadows a new undefeated occupation.

Having decided on the features of the desired Islamic discourse, it is necessary to anticipate our future (by making plans, setting goals and working hard to achieve them). In fact, this is not an easy job, since the external pressures foster the extremist discourse. The siege laid by the West on the Islamic nation has particularly increased after the Soviet Union collapsed and the wave of hatred was turned towards Islam. These pressures target even such deeply exclusive affairs as the educational curricula, personal and family conditions, women's issues, etc. The imperialistic states skillfully exploit the accusation of the possession of mass destruction weapons to practice pressures on other governments and violate their sovereignty and independence.

What a problematic paradox! Others mobilize their media machine to accuse people of terrorism, while they have a broad-minded and friendly approach towards them. The West has an image of Islam that is false and provokes the extremist religious discourse. It is the modern Islamic discourse that is destined to preserve its original, ideal features. Any open discourse in such a modern world should be based on reason and knowledge. In fact, it is a matter that should involve strategy and methodology, not enthusiasm and reaction.

(1) Mahmûd Amîn, Islamic World - The Arabic Discourse and Issues of the Time, 1st Edition, Syria, Fussilat for Studies, Translation and Publishing, 2000, p. 171.

Intellectual Pluralism and Dialogue in Muslim Society

Dr. Muhammad 'Abdul-Ghaffâr Ash-Sharîf(*)

There are different types of extremism: political, such as Nazism and other dictatorships; economic, such as communism and radical capitalism; social, such as dissolution and immorality; and media-related, such as broadcasting ideas that warp people's minds in the name of freedom, etc. After conducting a prolonged research, I found out that 80% of the causes of religious extremism can be ascribed to people's ignorance of the principles and rulings of religion.

All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, the Most Gracious and the Most Merciful, and peace and blessings be upon all Allah's Prophets and Messengers, and upon Muhammad, the last Prophet.

Islam invites us to adopt a benevolent dialogue and carry out a polite discussion when talking with others. In this context, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and discuss with them in a way that is best.***﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees):125]

(*) The secretary-general of the Ministry of Endowments (Kuwait).

Allah, Glorified be He, also says:

﴾***And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is most benevolent...***﴿ [Al-`Ankabût (The Spider): 46]

It is very clear that the Glorious Qur'ân orders Muslims to adopt a good methodology for their dialogue, if not the best one.

Imâm Al-Qushayrî (may Allah have mercy upon him) said, "You should demonstrate your point of view to your opponent, be lenient in your dialogue, be fair-minded, promote issues which you are sure are true and have well-founded proof, and judge matters without any personal prejudice."(1)

The prominent scholar Ibn `Ajîbah Al-Hasanî (may Allah have mercy upon him) said, "The statement 'in a way that is most benevolent' means the most gentle and kind way. Also, it means to reply to crudeness with

leniency, anger with patience, and misbehavior with advice. This can be obtained by calling people to Allah in a lenient and kind way, and showing them arguments and proofs without oppressing them."(2)

Besides, the Glorious Qur'ân orders Muslims to adopt this methodology in their dialogue with "the other". Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾***And tell My servants to say that which is best. Indeed, Satan induces [dissension] among them. Indeed Satan is ever, to mankind, a clear enemy.***﴿ [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 53]

The prominent scholar Ibn `Ajîbah (may Allah confer mercy upon him) added, "The allies of Allah are gentle and smooth. They use kind language with people and do what is best. They are full of joy and happiness, and fill the hearts of people with them. Moreover, they do their best to help people and guide the ignorant in a tender way. These allies have different morals and so different levels of esteem. The more they have good manners, the more they become honorable in the sight of Allah." In this regard, the Prophet (PBUH) said: «*By his good character a man will attain the degree of one who fasts during the day and prays during the night.*»(3)

In fact, Allah's religion (i.e. Islam) has been sent down to all people in spite of their diverse preferences and points of views that result from their different surroundings and upbringing.

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(1) "Latâ'if Al-Ishârât" (Wisdoms of Signs), 3/100.

(2) "Al-Bahr Al-Madîd" (The Vast Sea), 5/317 .

(3) "Al-Bahr Al-Madîd" (The Vast Sea), 4/101, with a slight change. The Hadîth is also related by Imâm Ahmad in Al-Musnad (A Collection of Ascribed Hadiths) 6/133, and Al-Hâkim in Al-Mustadrak (The Review) 1/60 .

1. Diversity as a Divine Law:

The Glorious Qur'ân confirms that diversity among people is an innate Divine law. In this respect, Allah, the Almighty, says: ﴿***And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community; but they will not cease to differ. Except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He has created them.***﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 118-119]

Ash-Shâtibî (may Allah have mercy upon him) said, "This verse implies that all people are different and will always be different as they are created to be so."

Imâm Mâlik (may Allah have mercy upon him) said, "Allah created people and divided them into two parties; a party destined to enter Paradise, and another destined to enter Hellfire[1]. The pronoun in 'has created them' refers to people. Hence, people cannot do anything that is not stated in the book of Allah's Knowledge. Here, diversity is not that of forms, colors and races. Rather, it is that of opinions, doctrines, religions and creeds, and results in man's happiness or misery in both the worldly life and the Hereafter. This is clearly demonstrated in Allah's saying:

﴿***Mankind was [of] one religion [before their deviation]; then Allah sent the prophets as bringers of good tidings and warners and sent down with them the Scripture in truth to judge between the people concerning that in which they differed. And none differed over it [i.e. the Scripture] except those who were given it - after the clear proofs came to them - out of jealous animosity among themselves.***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 213]

Confirming this fact is the aim of the verses that assert the diversity of people."[2]

2. Sharing Issues:

In its dialogue with "the other", Islam attempts – in every possible way - to create common grounds. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Say, "O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah." But if they turn away, then say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims [submitting to Him].***﴾ [Âl-`Imrân (The Household of `Imrân): 64]

(1) "Al-I'tisâm" (Seeking Protection) 2/165; Ibn Kathîr 2/465; Al-Baghawî 3/259.
(2) Ibid, 2/165.

Imâm Muhammad `Abduh (may Allah bestow mercy upon him) said, "The verses imply that you and we (i.e. Christians and Muslims) believe that the world is created and controlled by one God, who sent the Prophets to inform us about the deeds that make Him satisfied and those that cause His wrath. Therefore, let us establish these fundamentals and reject things that contradict them. Then, if you believe that Jesus Christ is the son of God, we should interpret such a belief in a way that does not contradict what is agreed upon by the Prophets. Moreover, if we assumed that Jesus Christ actually said that he is the son of God, did he mean that he is a God that is to be worshipped and did he invited people to worship him and his mother (the Virgin Mary)? Or did he, instead, invite them to worship Allah alone? Of course you agree with us that Jesus Christ invited people to worship God alone and sincerely submit to Him."(1)

Furthermore, Islam has adopted this approach with the People of the Scriptures as well as those of other religions. The Prophet (PBUH) said: «*I have only been sent to perfect righteous behavior.*»(2)

Al-Manâwî (may Allah confer mercy upon him) interpreted this *Hadîth* saying, "The Prophets were sent with good manners and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent to perfect these manners." (3) The Prophet (PBUH) said: «*When I was a boy, I witnessed Al-Mutayyibîn alliance with my uncles. I do not like to have red camels (a valuable kind of camels) in return for breaching it.*»(4)

The word 'Al-Mutayyibîn' is derived from the word 'Tayb' which means perfume. The story was that Banû Hashim, Zahrah and Taym met in the house of Ibn Jad`ân and put their hands in a vessel filled with perfume. At this time they promised to defend each other and support the oppressed against the oppressor. Hence, they were called Al-Mutayyibîn. (5)

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(1) "Tafsîr Al-Manâr" (Interpretation of the Qur'ân), 3/268.

(2) Narrated by Ahmad in his Musnad, 2/381; Al-Haythamî said, that its narrators are known for their authenticity, "Majma` Az-Zawâ'id" (Collection of Additions in Hadiths), no 13683.

(3) Al-Manâwî, "At-Taysîr" (Facilitation), 2/455.

(4) Al-Haythamî said, That Ahmad, Abû Ya`la and Al-Bazzâr narrated it; and the narrators of the Hadîth narrated by `Abdur-Rahmân Ibn `Awf are known for their authenticity. Az-Zuhrî deemed it Mursal (Attributed to the Prophet by the Companions' Follower) Hadîth, "Majma` Az-Zawâ'id" (Collection of Additions in Hadiths) .

(5) "Faydul-Qadir" (Bestowal of the Almighty); At-Taysîr (Facilitation), 4/122 .

3. Avoidance of Offending the Other:

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*It is not befitting for anyone of you to say that I am better than Yûnus (Prophet Jonah).* »[1]

Al-Bukhârî reported that Abû Hurayrah (may Allah be pleased with him) said: «*While a Jew was selling goods, he was given something which he did not accept (or he did not agree to accept). He (the Jew) said, "No, by Allah, Who chose Moses from among mankind." A person from the Ansâr heard it and so he punched the Jew in the face, saying, "You (have the audacity to) say 'By Him Who chose Moses from among mankind,' whereas Allah's Messenger (PBUH) is living amongst us!" The Jew went to Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and said, "O Abû Al-Qâsim, I am a Dhimmî and (thus need your protection) by a covenant." The Jew added, "Such and such person has punched me in the face.".' Thereupon Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, "Why did you punch him in the face?" The man related the story to the Messenger. Allah's Messenger (PBUH) became angry and the signs of anger could be seen on his face, and then said, "Do not make distinction amongst the Prophets of Allah. When the horn will be blown and whatever is in the heavens and the earth will swoon except for those whom Allah grant exception, then another horn will be blown and I will be the first amongst those who will recover and Moses (PBUH)*[2] *will be catching hold of the Throne and I will not know whether it is a compensation for that when he swooned on the Day of At- Tûr or he will be resurrected before me.* »[3]

The Prophet (PBUH) has forbidden us from dealing disrespectfully with people from other religions for the following reasons:

a- To teach politeness and modesty to the Muslim Nation, even in the case that there is a matter of dispute that is related to the creed.

b- Because such distinction (among the Prophets) may lead to prejudice and underestimating others, of whom some may be more righteous like the Prophets (Peace and Blessings be upon them).

c- Because this distinction may disturb and irritate others, a matter which may arouse dissensions.[2]

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, No. 3231.
(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî, No. 3414.
(3) "Al-Fath Ar-Rabbânî" (Divine Bestowal), 20/36 .

It is obvious that Islam forbids Muslims from insulting the deities of the non-Muslims. In this regard, Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***And insult not those whom they (disbelievers) worship besides Allah, lest they insult Allah wrongfully without knowledge...***﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 108]

In this verse, Allah, Exalted be He, prohibited believers from insulting the idols of the disbelievers because this could infuriate them, cause them to ignorantly insult Allah and lead them to turn away from those who call them to monotheism. (1)

4. Rational, Scientific Dialogue

Allah, the Almighty, says: ﴿***Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is most benevolent.***﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees): 125]

Interpreters of the Qur'ân said, "The word 'wisdom' refers to sound opinions and decisive arguments which lead to a state of certainty. This can only be achieved by following intellectual rules which are agreed upon among people as well as universal, scientific and concrete proofs." (2)

Hence, when the Glorious Qur'ân called people to monotheism, it used intellectual arguments and scientific proofs.

In this regard, Allah, Glory be to Him, says: ﴿***Or have they [i.e. men] taken for themselves gods from the earth who resurrect [the dead]? Had there been within them [i.e. the heavens and earth] gods besides Allah, they both would have been ruined. So exalted is Allah, Lord of the Throne, above what they describe.***﴾ [Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets): 21-22]

Interpreters of the Qur'ân said, "This verse contains an intellectual conflict of proofs used by scholars of the creed as a pretext. That is, if we supposed that we have two gods and they have two contradictory wills, so either both wills would be fulfilled, a matter which is inconceivable since it is impossible to combine two contradictions in one time and one place (this is a rational rule which is agreed upon), or one only would be fulfilled at the expense of the other; thereby, the one whose will would be fulfilled is worthy of being considered a god (and He would be in reality the one and only God), while the other one is too weak and incompetent to be considered a god."

In the previous verse, Allah, Exalted be He, demonstrates a rational proof which is agreed upon and a visible scientific one. Allah addresses the polytheists saying:

(1) See Tafsîr (Interpretation) of Al- Qurtubî, 7/41.
(2) "Fath Al-Qadîr" (Bestowal of the Creator) of Ash-Shawkânî, 3/203 with slight change .

1- Can your gods resurrect the dead?! This is a question for which available data confifirms that its answer is in the negative.

2- Contemplate the universe! Do you fifind any inconsistency or corruption in its order? This question arouses their attention to contemplate the realm of the earth. Does this not refer to the Oneness of Allah?"[1]

In this respect, Allah, the Almighty, says: ﴿***Allah has not taken any son, nor has there ever been with Him any deity. [If there had been], then each deity would have taken what it created, and some of them would have sought to overcome others. Exalted is Allah above what they describe [concerning Him].***﴾ [Al-Mu'minûn (The Believers): 91]

Therefore, the Glorious Qur'ân frequently invites its followers to contemplate the signs of the universe in the same way they contemplate Allah's Book (i.e. the Qur'ân). Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and the day, and the [great] ships which sail through the sea with that which benefits people, and what Allah has sent down from the heavens of rain, giving life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and dispersing therein every [kind of] moving creature, and [His] directing of the winds and the clouds controlled between the heaven and earth are signs for a people who are wise.***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 164]

Moreover, the Qur'ân invites them to take advantage of historical examples that demonstrate the grave destiny of the oppressors and arrogant people. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***Have they not traveled through the land and observed how the end was for those before them? These (older generations) were more numerous than them and greater in strength and left a greater affect on the land, but they were not aided by what they used to earn.***﴾ [Ghâfir (The Forgiver): 82]

In addition, the Glorious Qur'ân gives us practical examples of the tyrants among those who had authority and power, such as Fir`awn (i.e., Pharoah) and An-Namrûd, as well as those who had money, such as Qârûn (Korah), Al-Walîd Ibnul-Mughîrah, etc. These examples are meant to give a lesson to everybody throughout the ages.

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(1) See "Fath Al-Qadîr" (Bestowal of the Creator), 3/402; "Safwat At-Tafâsîr" (select books of exegesis of the Qur'ân), 2/258.

5. Cooperation in the Agreed upon Matters:

Allah, the Most High, says: ﴿***O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.***﴾ [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

After establishing his state in Medina, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) attempted to cooperate with the Jews of Medina. The pact of Medina is considered the first constitution of the Islamic state that regulates this cooperation. Its conditions are as follows:

"When the believers are at war, the Jews shall cooperate with them. The Jews of Banû `Awf and the believers constitute one nation, but each group has its own religion. This case applies to the Muslims, the Jews and their slaves. However, the one who oppresses people and commits sins only ruins himself and his household. Likewise, the Jews of Banû An-Najjâr, Banû Al- Hârith, Banû Al-Aws and Banû Jushm have the same rights and obligations as the Jews of Banû `Awf. But whoever oppresses people and commits sins only ruins himself and his household. Indeed, righteousness prevents one from committing sins. The clan of Tha`labah is on equal terms with its slaves, and so are the slaves of the followers of the Jews. No Jew can leave Medina without permission from Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). If there is an issue concerning murder, it shall not be ended if someone still seeks revenge. Whoever violates this pact, he and his household shall bear the consequences, except those who have been aggressed against. Allah and the believers have accepted this pact. Both the Muslims and the Jews shall be responsible for their own livelihood. Whoever fights those who have taken this pact shall be fought by both the Muslims and the Jews. Both parties (the Muslims and the Jews) shall offer counsel to each other, and righteousness prevents sin. No one is responsible for whatever sins his ally commits, and the oppressed shall be defended and protected. As long as the believers are at war, the Jews shall share the expenses of such a war with them. Yathrib (Medina) shall not be trespassed by those who have agreed on this pact. The neighbour shall not be harmed or offended. No one shall defend the rights of others except after having their permission. If a quarrel arouses amongst those who have agreed on this pact and it might turn into chaos, the matter of dispute shall be reverted to Allah, Exalted be He, and his Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Allah and the believers have accepted this

pact. The tribe of Quraysh and its allies shall not be defended or helped. If Yathrib (Medina) is attacked, the two parties of this agreement shall cooperate to defend it. If the Jews are invited to sign a peace treaty with the Muslims, they shall agree. Likewise, if the Muslims are invited to sign a peace treaty with the Jews, they shall agree, but this is not applied to those who breach the pact, each party of the pact shall adhere to his part of the agreement. The Jews of the tribe of Al-Aws as well as their slaves are on equal terms with the two parties of this agreement. These two parties shall accept this. Righteousness prevents sin. Retribution shall be equal to one's deeds. Allah and the believers have accepted this pact. Moreover, this pact shall not protect an oppressor or a sinner. Whoever leaves or stays in Medina is safe, except for those who oppress people and commit sins.

Allah, Exalted be He, and His Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) protect and support those who are righteous and pious."

This pact contains the following five underlying principles:

1- The Jews are considered citizens of the Islamic State, they have freedom to practice their religion and they shall be protected and defended by the state.

2- The Jews shall support the Islamic State in deterring its enemies.

3- The Jews shall offer counsel to the Islamic State and not conspire against it. If they know any information concerning conspiracy against the Islamic State, they shall disclose it.

4- The Jews shall not leave Medina without the permission of the Islamic State.

5- The Islamic State shall have the supreme authority over its citizens. The Jews should revert to it to settle the disputes occurring among them and the Muslims.[1]

I preferred to mention the complete text of the pact of Medina concerning the Jews in order to show how Islam seeks to cooperate with "the other". The punishment of the Jews that occurred later was a result of violating thepact with the Muslims.[2]

The Glorious Qur'ân determined the standard of cooperation in the following verse: ﴿***And cooperate in righteousness and piety, but do not cooperate in sin and aggression.***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 2]

(1) Muhammad Rawwâs, (A New Reading of the Prophetic Biography), p. 146.
(2) See Al-Mansûr Furî, Allah's mercy to the worlds, 3/464.

6. Tolerance Regarding Matters of Disagreement

It is very clear that Islam shows tolerance towards the non-Muslims. In this regard, Allah, the Almighty, says: ﴿***There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] religion...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

Ibn `Abbâs (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

"This verse was sent down on the occasion that one of Al-Ansâr (Supporters of Medina) of Banû Sâlim Ibn `Awf called Al-Husayn, who was a Muslim and had two Christian sons, asked the Prophet (PBUH), 'May I force them (my sons) to embrace Islam, as they want to stay Christians?' So, Allah revealed the aforementioned verse."

In some other interpretations of the Qur'ân, Al-Husayn tried to force his two sons to embrace Islam. As a result, they complained to the Prophet (PBUH). Then, Al-Husayn told the Prophet (PBUH), "Will a part of me enter Hellfire while I am watching?!"

Ibn Jarîr related some stories concerning women's vows to make their sons Jews in the Pre-Islamic period of ignorance so that they may live. After Islam, Muslims tried to force their non-Muslim children toembrace Islam. Hence, this verse was revealed to settle this issue.

Islam prohibits forcing non-Muslims to embrace Islam if they do not believe in it. That is because religion involves the submission of the soul. In this manner, submission cannot be attained by coercion, but only by conclusive argument. Thus, after rejecting coercion, Allah, the Most High, says:

﴿***...The right path has become distinct from the wrong one...***﴾[1] [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

This verse implies that legal *Jihâd* (fighting in the cause of Allah), which cannot be suspended by the justice of one just man or the injustice of one oppressor, has never been used to force non-Muslims to embrace Islam. On the contrary, it has been used to defend and protect the Islamic *Da`wah* (Dissemination of Islamic teachings), circulate justice among people and bring people into ultimate freedom by making them stop worshipping others like them.[2]

When Rib`î Ibn ` Îmir was sent to Rustum, the leader of the Persians, he was asked, "What did bring you?" Rib`î replied, "Allah, Exalted be He, sent us to convert whom He wills from worshipping humans to worshipping

(1) Tafsîr Al-Manâr (Interpretation of the Qur'ân), 3/31.
(2) Al-Qâsimî, 3/665 with slight change.

Him; from the direness of life to its ease; and from the injustice of other religions to the justice of Islam..."[1]

This proves that the Muslims believe that they have a message to deliver to people, whoever accepts it becomes their brother, regardless of his identity or previous religion, but whoever refuses it should not be forced to accept it.

However, the one who refuses to accept this message should not stand between people and the voice of righteousness (i.e. Islam) because such people have been gifted with a mind to judge matters and if they accepted Islam, this would be good for them, but if they refused, they would still be safe in the Islamic state as long as they abide by the provisions of citizenship.

It is a sign of great tolerance that Islam orders its followers to respect the religion of their wives and those who are under their authority?! Ibn Qudâmah included some of the *Fatwas* issued by *Faqîhs* (Muslim scholars) concerning the rights of the non-Muslim wife in his book *Al-Mughnî* (The Sufficient) as follows:

1- Mâlik, Ath-Thawrî, Ahmad and Ash-Shâfifi'î state that a Muslim husband is not allowed to force his *Dhimmî*[2] (1) wife to perform *Ghusl* (ritual bath), because sexual intercourse has nothing to do with this.

2- Ahmad states that the Muslim can prevent his Muslim wife from drinking wine because they both deem this as prohibited. However, he is not allowed to prevent her from drinking wine if she is a *Dhimmî*, as she deems it lawful in her religion.

3- When Imâm Ahmad was asked about a Muslim who buys his *Dhimmî* wife a *Zunnâr* (a waist belt worn by the non-Muslims) he said, "He should not buy it. He should let her buy it herself. Moreover, he should not prevent her from wearing it, however; he is prevented from wearing it."

Thereupon, it is very clear that Islam respects other religions, even if the followers of these religions are under the authority of the Muslims. On this basis, Muslims carry out dealings with *Dhimmîs.*

Here, I quote the statement of the German orientalist, Adam Metz, mentioned in his book titled "The Civilized and Islamic Values", "The most significant difference between the Islamic empire and Europe, which was Christian in the Middle Ages, is the presence of a large number of *Dhimmîs*

(1) Al-Bidâyah Wâ An-Nihâyah (The Beginning and the End), 7/39.

(2) A non-Muslim who lives in and under the protection of an Islamic state.

among the Muslims. These *Dhimmîs* constituted an obstacle in the way of the Muslim people to establish a political unity. The churches, temples and monasteries of the Christians and the Jews represented a distinctive community. Relying on the treaties held between them and the Muslims and on the rights granted to them, Dhimmîs refused to be integrated into the Islamic society, resulting in the Islamic society not fully establishing themselves in their land to the extent that Muslims felt as if they were just victorious foreigners, but not citizens. Thus, the feudal idea did not disappear. Moreover, the presence of the Christians among the Muslims was the reason behind the rise of the Christian principles of tolerance advocated by the modern reformers. The need for peaceful co-existence brought about a kind of tolerance that was not familiar in Europe during the Middle Ages. As a result of such tolerance, the science of comparing religions, which studies diverse religions and creeds, emerged and aroused great interest."

7. Rejecting Violence

Addressing His Prophet (PBUH), Allah, the Almighty, says: ***﴿So, by Allah's mercy, [O Muhammad], you were lenient with them. And if you had been rude [in speech] and harsh in heart, they would have disbanded from about you. So pardon them and ask forgiveness for them and consult them in the affairs (of the moment). And when you have decided, then rely upon Allah. Indeed, Allah loves those who rely [upon Him].﴾*** [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 159]

Allah's Messenger (PBUH) set this order as a rule for words and actions as he said: «*Verily Allah is kind and He loves kindness and confers upon kindness which he does not confer upon severity or anything else.*»[1]

Furthermore, this is evident in the course of the Prophet's life. In this respect, 'Î'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated: «*'Î'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) narrated: A group of Jews came to Allah's Messenger and said, "As-Sâmu 'Alaykum (death be on you), and I understood it and so I said to them, "'Alaykum As-Sâmu wa Al-La'nah (death and curse be on you)." Allah's Messenger said, "Be calm, O 'Î'ishah, for Allah loves that one should be kind and lenient in all matters." I said, "O Allah's Messenger! Have you not heard what they have said?" Allah's Messenger*

(1) An agreed upon Hadîth related by Al-Bukhârî and Muslim, At-Tâj Al-Jâmi' Lî Al-Usûl (At-Tâj for the Principal Books of Hadîth), 5/85.

said, "I have (already) said (to them), 'Wa 'Alaykum (and upon you as well)'»[1]

Also, Anas (may Allah be pleased with him) narrated:

«While I was walking with the Messenger who was wearing a Najrani outer garment with a thick hem, a Bedouin came to the Prophet and pulled his garment so violently that I could see the impress of the hem of the garment on the Messenger's shoulder, caused by the violence of that man's pull. Then, the Bedouin said, "O Muhammad, order for me something from Allah's property (i.e., the Muslims' public money) which you have." The Messenger turned to him and smiled, and ordered that a gift be given to him.»

Accordingly, it is a great wrong done to Islam to accuse it of calling its followers to adopt terrorism and violate people's lives, dignity and property.

On the contrary, Islam calls for the opposite of such allegations, as the Prophet (PBUH) said:

«A Muslim is the one from whose hand and tongue Muslims are safe and a believer is one whom people trust with regard to their life and wealth.»[2]

At-Tirmidhî related the following *Hadîth* and deemed it as a *Sahîh* (Authentic) and *Hasan* (Approved) *Hadîth*:

"A Muslim is the one from whose hand and tongue Muslims are safe and a believer is one whom people trust with regard to their life and wealth."

Moreover, Islam advocates mercy to animals. Allah's Prophet (PBUH) said:

«A woman got into Hellfire because of a cat she had tied, and thus she did neither feed it nor let it free so that it could eat from the insects of the earth»[3]

In a word, rejecting violence is not restricted to Islam alone, but it involves other heavenly religions which have been sent with love, cooperation, mercy and good relationships. Unfortunately, many followers of

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî, No. 3231; and Muslim, No. 1795.
(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî.
(3) Related by Al-Bukhârî.

the heavenly religions deviate from the principles of these sublime religions for many reasons. After conducting a prolonged research supported by the University of Kuwait, I found out that 80% of the causes of religious extremism can be ascribed to people's ignorance of the principles and rulings of religion. Here, I aim at differentiating between this kind of extremism and the other kinds, be they political, such as Nazism and dictatorships; economic, such as communism and radical capitalism; social, such as dissipation and immorality; or media- related, such as transgressing people's dignity and warping their minds with corrupt ideas in the name of freedom, etc. Allah's Prophet (PBUH) warned us against being ignorant of the principles and rulings of religion, as he said:

«Allah does not take away the knowledge by taking it away from (the hearts of) the people, but (He) takes it away by (causing) the death of the scholars until when none of scholars remains; people will take as their leaders ignorant persons who, when consulted, will give their verdict without knowledge. So, they will go astray and will lead the people astray.»[1]

For Muslims, it is one of the severest sins to argue about religious issues without any previous knowledge. In this regard, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾Say, "My Lord has only forbidden immoralities - what is apparent of them and what is concealed - and sin, and oppression without right, and that you associate with Allah that for which He has not sent down any authority, and that you say about Allah of which you have no knowledge.﴿ [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 33]

As for falsely judging matters as lawful or not. Allah, the Most High, says: ***﴾And do not say about what your tongues assert of untruth, "This is lawful and this is unlawful," to invent a falsehood about Allah. Indeed, those who invent falsehoods about Allah will not succeed.﴿*** [An-Nahl (The Bees):116]

To conclude, these are some of the fundamentals of partaking in dialogue and the principles that people of all civilizations agree upon. We invoke Allah to help us to conceive and apply them perfectly.

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(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî.

Islamic Discourse and Purposive Methodology

Prof. Riyâd Adhamî (*)

An observer of the problems of life and the attempts of Islamic discourse, endeavoring to deal with them, will find much haste and little patience in addressing and considering reality, and he will find reliance on generalities and slogans supposedly taken to be comprehensive and absolute. However, the results turn out to be too poor to contribute to the development of thought, improvement of conditions or formulation of a discourse that takes the Islamic Sharî'ah, as intended by Allah, a mercy for all the worlds.

Introduction:

The Muslim nation is experiencing a crisis, which is commonly said to have affected the nation's political, economic, social and intellectual aspects of life. Focus on this crisis has become almost morbid, where it may be imagined that a protest or just a complaint is the utmost possible or expected course that can be taken when facing the wrong actions.

In such a problematic situation, the nation is looking at the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah* as the best solution. The unhappy paradox is that, while trying to be the rescuer with its originality and influence, the Islamic

(*) Researcher on Islamic Affairs (USA).

discourse is actually part and parcel of the crisis. Being part of the problem, it is unable to introduce a solution or help better the status quo.

In response to challenges and influences, Islamic discourse is taken to task for being too emotional and too restricted to secondary or only a limited number of matters. As a result, there is no objective reasoning or holistic vision and facts are not dealt with according to their priorities; matters are oversimplified; unawareness of the factual reality is manifest; and focusing on the past becomes the norm.

With this variety of aspects, however, the crisis of Islamic discourse can be summarized into two overlapping elements:

- Failure to understand the possibilities and opportunities included in the Islamic *Sharī'ah*.

- Failure to understand reality with its constituent parts, influences and changes.

The literal understanding of the *Shar'ī* (related to *Sharī'ah*) texts, restriction to superficiality and a shallow focus, and the orientation of thoughts to the distant past, are all attitudes which have turned the *Sharī'ah* into a mere set of shackles and burdens. The essence of legislation and the spirit of the *Shar'ī* rulings have become of no effect, and the opportunities to take action are undertaken in a dreadfully stereotyped way; one that does, in no sense, find any need for change, even if the temporal and spatial dimensions are altered. The factual reality and the attitudinal mainstream are given the slightest attention by (those involved in) religious public discourse. When someone tries to deal with the sorrowful reality of the nation using reason and logic, he will feel lonely, threatened and subject to the ideological terrorism, which is practiced against the dissidents from the mainstream.

Many thinkers and scholars have worked to eliminate the gap between the intellect and reality in Islamic discourse. Despite their valuable contributions, they could not make any tangible difference; despite the current trends of religious wakefulness, the intellectual community still looks conservatively at the intervention of human reasoning. Islamic discourse needs much more effort for it to be able to awaken the nation to the essence of the Islamic creed and religious commitment, better its conditions and performance, rid it of extremism, collectively mobilize it, and enhance social integration and cooperation.

In the last few decades, the call for a revival of the *Shar'î* purposive methodology has been highly welcomed in the *Shar'î* and academic spheres. Numerous studies have been made to find out the aspects of that methodology from the traditions of the past scholars, i.e. from the era of the Prophet's Companions and their successors, including Imâm Al-Juwaynî, Imâm Al-Ghazâlî, Imâm Al-Qarâfî, and Al-'Izz Ibn 'Abdus-Salâm, and finally to the era of Imâm Ash-Shâtibî, Ibn 'Âshûr and 'Allâl Al-Fâsî.

In reality, this methodology has enormous potential to settle the crisis of Islamic discourse. It possesses all the instruments required to associate the Islamic *Sharî'ah* (with its texts, rulings and traditions) with its function of making people's lives better, eliminating sufferings and disseminating peace and welfare all over the world. However, this commendable aim is still affected by the nature of religious discourse, which is strongly committed to trivialities, history-oriented and unable to enforce the cognitive tools to formulate a public discourse that involves the nation as a whole.

The present treatise is intended to outline the features of the abovementioned purposive methodology, so that it will be possible for it to be employed to deal with the first problem in Islamic discourse; i.e. its clear failure to realize the potential of the Islamic *Sharî'ah* in contributing to the development of the nation. Then, there will be an overview of the second problem, giving some clarifications of the connection between the Islamic *Sharî'ah* and factual reality. This can help provide the Islamic discourse with all the requirements to have a successful influence and promote motivation.

Purposive Methodology: Correction of Misunderstanding

Most importantly, the purposive methodology connects the *Sharî'ah* with the intellect and reality; this relation is governed by the purposes and regulations of the *Sharî'ah*, which constitute the intrinsic, solid logic used to judge things and to direct human thought. Hopefully, this premise is a step to resolve the complexity of the hesitant attitude towards the intervention of human reasoning in religious discourse. By this, we are urging scholars to look at the general logic and concepts of the Qur'ân as well as the features and purposes of the *Sharî'ah* as determined by Divine Revelation.

It is important to point out that the mere linguistic meanings do not account for the real implications of words or the responses to them. The cultural background associated with words should be taken into account.

Here, context is crucial in order to communicate the intended message without any confusion or misunderstanding.

For example, such words as backwardness, progress, renaissance, civilization and openness carry a heavy burden of memories of the colonial era in the Islamic countries. When used, these words bring to mind the painful context associated with them, where the colonial West, with its brutal and racist treatment with the natives of its colonies, had the upper hand and absolute power. Thus, it is not surprising that our nation reacts negatively to and avoids these sorts of words. As a result, when they use these words in their writings, social reformers will need to take a lot of time and effort to clarify the difference between their intended reforms and the negative connotations of these originally positive words.

Reasonable efforts should be made to substantiate and propagate original concepts which are related to the old glorious days of the Islamic civilization and are derived from the Prophetic *Sunnah* and the Glorious Qur'ân; e.g. renewal, perfection, competence, consultation and consensus. Using language that has positive connotations can effectively promote the desired influence.

Thus, the purposive methodology is expected, hopefully, to be able to enhance the mental association of the Islamic *Sharî'ah* with social reform, using language and approaches that avoid sectarian, wordy warfare and popularly unpleasant notions.

Historically, the writings on the purposive methodology have limited this field to the *Shar'î* scholars. Imâm Muhammad At-Tâhir Ibn `Âshûr maintained that the science of Purposes of the *Sharî'ah* is something pertaining solely to the *Shar'î* scholars and authorities. Ideally, a layperson is to receive the *Shar'î* information without knowing their underlying purposes, since he is not aware of how to adjust or apply them. The more *Shar'î* knowledge a person has, the more he will be familiar with the purposes of *Shar'î* rulings.

Is it logically justifiable, according to the Islamic *Sharî'ah*, that legally accountable citizens are kept unaware of the purposive methodology? In this case, how can a sound religious commitment be achieved which is in line with the *Shar'î* values and guidelines? What will be the state of the nation's relation to the *Sharî'ah* if knowledge of the purposes of the *Shar'î* remain separated from the everyday life of the religious public?

To find out the answers to these questions, some scholars, whose work is relevant to this subject, are cited below.

In his book *Al-Muwâfaqât* (Agreements), Imâm Ash-Shâtibî emphasized a very important *Shar'î* principle, stipulating that "any legitimate act intended for a purpose other than that intended by the Lawgiver[1] is invalid". Accordingly, knowledge of the purposes intended by the Lawgiver is necessary for any legally accountable Muslim, so that he may not do something that makes his deeds null and void. Such knowledge should not be restricted to those who give *Fatwâs* (i.e. legal opinions issued by a *Mufti*) and judgments only. Every individual should know the purposes of the *Shar'î* which are related to every activity in his daily life, to make sure that his personal intentions are in accordance with such purposes. Obedience to *Shar'î* ordinances without realizing their purposes of improvement, justice and mercy can easily reduce the *Sharî'ah* to just a set of decrees and burdens that people may abandon for the slightest reason.

Many scholars have discussed that using tricks in religion, and presenting things prohibited by Allah in an apparently lawful way is a deceptive and dishonest behavior. Imâm Ibnul-Qayyim elaborated on deception in religion and illustrated it with many examples. In his comment about *Shar'î* principles, stating that "the purposes and intentions only are what count in the Islamic *Sharî'ah*", he maintained: "All forms of deception come under the Prophetic *Hadîth*: «*Indeed, (the correctness and rewards of) deeds depend upon intentions, and every person gets (the reward of) what he has intended.*»[2]

This implies that human deeds are associated to their underlying purposes, and that a person benefits only from his hidden, not apparent, intentions."

Using misleading ways in religion is a common "disease of society". It is likely to be caused mainly by the literalistic and ritualistic approaches to *Fiqh*, which divert people's attention from the purposes and objectives of human conduct when considering the *Shar'î* rulings pertaining to them. Imâm Ibnul-Qayyim gave more than 100 examples of the rulings that dishonest people try to evade. All these examples are related to the conduct of legally accountable persons. In each example, it turns out that both

(1) The Lawgiver of Sharî'ah (i.e. Islamic Law) is Allah, Exalted be He; the term can also refer to the Prophet (PBUH) as he never ordained but what was revealed to him by Allah.
(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî.

the layperson and the legal *Mufti* should be aware of the underlying *Shar'î* purposes of a given judgment.

In his famous book *Ihyâ' 'Ulûm Ad-Dîn* (Revival of Religious Sciences), Imâm Al-Ghazâlî explained how a Muslim can act religiously in his worship and transactions. The keystone of the book was based on purposes and intentions. It stated that human actions should be based on submission to the *Sharî'ah*, integrity and the overall benefit. Sticking to the literal ordinances should not be exaggerated to the extent of obsession and hardship. A great deal of the book exemplified the purposes of *Shar'î* rulings, revealing that obedience to the *Sharî'ah* should be combined with pursuing the best interests of the people.

In his above mentioned book, Imâm Ash-Shâtibî stated that *Ijtihâd* (i.e. legal reasoning and discretion) on the applicable judgments is necessary for every legally accountable person for him to be duly observant of the *Shar'î* obligations. He wrote, "Actually, it (i.e. *Ijtihâd*) is necessary for every scrutinizer, judge, *Mufti* and even every legally accountable person. For example, there is a *Fiqhî* principle that any inattentively additional act in prayer, whether this is part of the prayer or not, is forgivable if trivial, and those that are not trivial are not forgivable. When a layperson commits such an inattentive addition, he should consider it carefully and determine whether it is trivial or not, which can only be done via *Ijtihâd*. Then, he should apply his findings to his prayer and act accordingly. So, *Ijtihâd* is necessary at all times, as it is the prerequisite for being legally accountable. If accountability is enforced but *Ijtihâd* is viewed as being irrelevant, then this will be an unattainable demand, which is never acceptable by the *Sharî'ah*."

Furthermore, when explaining the requirements of *Ijtihâd* about applicable judgments, Imâm Ash-Shâtibî stressed the importance of being aware of the purposes of the rulings for which a person carries out *Ijtihâd* for his day-to-day affairs.

In the same book, Imâm Ash-Shâtibî maintained that when observing the *Shar'î* obligations and prohibitions, it is necessary to consider the results of one's actions. This is imperative for every legally accountable person, in order to prevent undesired outcomes. Showing that the consideration of the practical outcomes is not limited to the judicial and *Fatwâ* personnel, Ash-Shâtibî cited the following Qur'anic verse:

﴿***And do not insult those whom they (i.e. disbelievers) worship other than Allah, lest they insult Allah in enmity without knowledge...***﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle):108]

This legislative text is general and comprehensive for all those held legally accountable by the Islamic *Sharî'ah*. Paying attention to the results of one's actions is something strongly connected to the *Shar'î* principles that seek to better people's lives.

In the end of his book *Ghiyâth Al-Umam* (Help for the Nations), Imâm Al-Juwaynî explained what a legally accountable person should do in case *Muftis* and *Imâms* are no longer found. He pointed out why he focused on this point: "... These days, I notice that *Imâms* die and leave no students behind, and students have become satisfied with being on the margins of the *Fiqhî* circles. At best, they only seek controversial issues to boast about them or theatrical speeches to affect the riffraff. I realized for sure that, if things continue to be the same, the *Shar'î* scholars will soon be past history, leaving nothing behind but books and writings." Through his work, Imâm Al-Juwaynî intended to trace the detailed *Shar'î* legislations and rulings back to their underlying principles and purposes, which are easily understandable by all people. He wrote, "So, I have collected these chapters. I wish that copies of them will be widely distributed in different countries, so that the future generations can hopefully understand them, since they are well-defined and definitely proven. I wish they will pay their full attention to these writings, and thus they will be aware of their *Shar'î* obligations and duties." This pioneering attempt of Imâm Al-Juwaynî is a substantial methodology of public discourse regarding the *Shar'î* purposes and obligations; one that begins with the main rulings and purposes which represent the basic principles of religion and can easily be understood by all people. He then introduces people to the more extensive details, suitable for particular circumstances and needs. This attempt to outline *Fiqh*, in its jurisprudential sense, gives priority to the understanding of the main principles and purposes of the *Sharî'ah*. When all people are taught these major facts of *Sharî'ah*, they will not be subject to the illusion that they should first learn the details and minor points of the *Sharî'ah*. This can actually strengthen their adherence to the Islamic *Sharî'ah* and make them reject any claims to reorder its components.

Scholars say that one of the most important conditions of being a *Mufti* is to be aware of the present reality with its facts, conditions

and courses of action, and that the first source of difference in opinion among scholars is due to how much they know about this point. This was explained by Imâm Ibnul-Qayyim (may Allah confer mercy upon him) in his book *I'lâm Al-Mwaqqi'în* (Informing *Muftis*). He wrote, "If someone gives people *Fatwâs* based on just what is mentioned in the books, regardless of their conditions, traditions, time and place, then he will be going astray and misguiding others."

'Umar Ibnul-Khattâb, may Allah be pleased with him, sent a letter to Abû Mûsâ Al-Ash'arî, may Allah be pleased with him, giving him some guidelines about judiciary. He wrote, "Give top priority to investigate whatever you are told. It makes no sense to talk about rights while they are not protected." Imâm Ibnul-Qayyim explained, "Neither a *Mufti* nor a ruler can practice their functions properly unless they have two kinds of understanding: First, the understanding of reality and inference from the available evidence and clues; and second, the understanding of what should be done with this reality (i.e. the judgments given by Allah, through His Book or His Messenger, concerning this specific reality) and then matching them together."

Today, we live in the age of the "information explosion", when every discipline and profession has become a distinctive specialization with its own branches and applications. No single person, no matter how experienced and knowledgeable he is, can be fully aware of even one discipline. The time of encyclopedic scholars has gone! No such types of experts and authorities of wisdom with their comprehensive understanding of reality and wide knowledge of every existing area of knowledge can be found.

This problem can only be resolved by disseminating awareness of the *Shar'î* fundamentals and purposes among the specialists in every field of knowledge and activity. Then, dialogue and consultation can take place between the *Shar'î* scholars and Muslim experts, giving further evidence that Muslims can lead an active, realistic life following the eternal Islamic guidance and perfect *Sharî'ah*.

It is renewal that can restore the religion's spirit and vigor for a nation that has been suffering from numerous, messy human interventions. The desired renewal can only be achieved using two elements: The knowledge of *Sharî'ah* and the awareness of reality. Successful interaction between the two elements is only possible when the knowledge of the purposes is

the language spoken by *Shar'î* scholars, keeping away from the literality of texts and the formalism of thought, and when it is the language used by every professional in considering how reality can be dealt with to accomplish the *Shar'î* purposes in his particular field of specialization, and suggest methods to provide services and needs according to the Islamic understanding and commitment, and the *Shar'î* regulations and purposes. With all this, the above mentioned points, renewal will make good sense and the grand ideal can be translated into reality, deriving its existence and effectiveness from a wide range of expert and devoted Muslims.

The underlying principles of religion (with its *Shar'î*, referential and doctrinal concepts) are already agreed on by all Muslims, regardless of their doctrines and beliefs. Disagreement, on the other hand, may occur about how to approach and apply these ideals and concepts. It can almost always be attributed to the different approaches to the facts of reality. Thus, if the fundamentals are generally admitted and the call for *Ijtihâd* and renewal engages every Muslim in contributing to the understanding of reality in terms of his own role in the society, then religion and its guidelines will be brought back to their natural position in the life of the individual and the nation.

When the whole nation takes this direction, every Muslim, whatever his level of knowledge and education is, will act upon two basics. First, he should attempt to understand the fundamentals and general rulings through ongoing interaction with the *Shar'î* scholars and legislators.

Second, he should attempt to understand the profession or role that he practices in the society. By these two bases together, a Muslim will cooperate with his fellow professionals and specialists to find out how to apply the fundamentals, realize public interest and eliminate sufferings.

For example, when it is widely known that one of the *Shar'î* fundamentals is to prevent deception and fraud in transactions, no one will know better how to enforce that *Shar'î* principle in any given profession than its specialists who handle their field everyday. Likewise, when one knows that among the *Shar'î* purposes in transactions is to avoid any ambiguity that may cause dispute, he will make sure that he takes all the procedures and completes all the documentation that are required in his profession and that are proven to be effective for it.

Such a trend can correct matters according to the view that Islam is the final (Heavenly) mission that determines the basic values and principles

and leaves the door open for renewal and change in methods. When this belief is well-established, the history of Muslim societies, from the time of the Prophetic Message to the present, will be seen as a series of inspiring attempts, that are temporally and spatially contextualized, to understand how the early Muslims used to assimilate the Islamic values and principles in their lives. In this way, history will become a practical model, not a substitute for values that we seek to imitate, following the fine details and methods exactly, a matter which can cause a lot of difficulty and distress.

Such a trend can make a Muslim feel that he is accountable for the faculties, skills and experiences with which Allah endowed him, and that he, himself, is the one who is essentially obligated to establish and assimilate the *Shar'ī* values in his field and no one else can take his place in these matters.

Such a trend can exonerate the *Shar'ī* scholars from being thought as being obligated to deal with all issues in every fine detail, and thus can keep them away from affectation, pretentiousness and from talking about matters that they have no knowledge about. Things have become too complicated to be effifficiently mastered by any person, except by the professionals and experts in the appropriate field. At the same time, the underlying basics and regulations belong to the functions of the *Shar'ī* scholars and are derived from the *Shar'ī* texts, Islamic heritage and successful experiences of the Islamic societies. The issue of using the overall values and guidelines to deal with the requirements of real life remains a matter of controversy, consultation and cooperation among the different social groups and the knowledgeable figures of society.

Such a trend can give thinkers and activists clear insight into the points of agreement and disagreement, regardless of the simple stance of raising objections, which emphasizes partiality and fanaticism, wastes a lot of effort and drives the nation to disunity and division.

Through all this, society will regain trust in its religious commitment and Muslims will be able to play their essential role of improving the life of the whole Islamic nation. Inspired by the spirit of the law and the aims of the *Sharīah*, every Muslim will express his opinion and give advice when he finds something wrong in his field of specialization.

It may be relevant to point out that in medicine it is no longer acceptable to keep a patient isolated from the medical decision concerning his condition. A physician has to explain to his clients, in simple language,

how the treatment works and what can help them feel better, as well as to encourage them to be cooperative and responsible.

The study of "purposes", which should be supported and spread widely amongst the people, involves the knowledge of the underlying principles that regulate the study and examination of different types of human activity. This can make clear the difference between strategies and techniques; between the agreed holistic concepts and controversial minor details; and between the values of the eternal *Sharî'ah* and how it is applied over the temporal and spatial horizons.

Human behavior should be understood within its specific contexts and in relation to the cultural model that it recalls or substantiates. For example, the Glorious Qur'ân describes the functions that money has in the society and how wealth is distributed. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿... ***Your property which Allah has made a means of sustenance for you...***﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 5]

He also says: ﴿... ***So that it may not be a fortune circulated among the rich among you...***﴾ [Al-Hashr (The Mustering): 7]

Thus, if a *Fatwâ* on financial matters ignores these *Shar'î* guidelines, it will definitely be defective and isolated from the values that the Qur'ân was sent down to confirm and spread, whatever efforts *Muftis* may exert to accomplish the partial texts upon which they depend. When dealing with any case, it is necessary to collect all the relevant texts and information and try to come up with a holistic understanding of the case in light of the general features and purposes of the *Sharî'ah*.

In his book *Maqâsid Ash-Sharî'ah Al-Islâmiyyah* (The Aims of the Islamic *Sharî'ah*), Imâm Muhammad At-Tâhir Ibn `Âshûr aimed to substantiate the science of purposes. At the end of the book, he wrote important chapters on the aims of the different categories of legal and commercial transactions. His pioneering work was an innovative approach in the formulation of the *Fiqh* of Transactions. It is hoped that more and more scholars will pay attention to this discipline, in order to restore the interaction between real life and how the Heavenly values and guidance are manifested and disseminated.

The methodology of purposes, in its collective public dimension that makes the *Shar'î* scholars interact with all social groups to fulfill the responsibility of establishing the religion and using it to purify life

(in general), is the answer to those who feel anxious that the purposes which we aim to liberate and substantiate may be mixed with selfish, personal interests. It is not surprising that the traditional religious discourse feels highly suspicious about the purposive approach, since *Fiqh* often pays much less attention to the public dimension of the *Sharî`ah* than to the individual issues. When Imâm Ibn `Âshûr included the nation (the public dimension) rather than the accountable individual aspects when considering legislation, he was making a considerable addition to the contributions of Imâm Ash-Shâtibî on the *Shar`î* purposes.

This addition enabled Ibn `Âshûr to solve more than one problem at once. At the very beginning of the above mentioned book, he stated, "When I use the term 'legislation', I mean the nation's law, not what is absolutely legitimate; I do not intend the supererogatory or the abominable." [1] He revealed that the science of *Shar`î* purposes is one that deals with general, collective issues and that the rulings he hoped to establish are ones which address the Islamic nation and the Islamic bond. He resumed, "What is more, I think that the rulings pertaining to the acts of worship are worth being called "a religious commitment" and they have other hidden merits relating to self-management and individual purification that support the whole society." [2]

In my point of view, the approach substantiated by Ibn `Âshûr (may Allah confer mercy upon him) can solve a big problem present in the history of *Fiqh* and its fundamentals; that is, the balance between the concept of religious piety and the reasonableness of the obligations.

Indications of this resolution appear when comparing the thesis of Ibn `Âshûr to the contribution of Ash-Shâtibî on this issue. In *Al-Muwâfaqât*, Ash-Shâtibî (may Allah confer mercy upon him) combined the worldly life with the Hereafter in his definition of the necessary purposes, as the national dimension was not included in his thoughts.

Ibn `Âshûr, by contrast, clearly emphasized, "All the Heavenly legislations, and the Islamic *Sharî`ah* in particular, are intended for everything that brings good to humankind, both in the short and long terms; i.e., in the present actuality and the resulting consequences. The long term here does not refer to the matters pertaining to the Hereafter. The Heavenly legislations do

(1) Muhammad At-Tâhir Ibn `Âshûr, Maqâsid Ash-Sharî`ah Al-Islâmiyyah, p. 8.
(2) Ibid., p. 8.

not tell people what to do in the Hereafter; rather, the Hereafter is intended by Allah as a retribution for the way people lived in this world."[1]

Therefore, it was not surprising that Ash-Shâtibî focused on the individual level, considering the main purpose of the *Sharî'ah* to be what drives every person away from his personal desires and whims and makes him a true servant of Allah. He combined both the worldly life and the Hereafter, and pointed out that the religious obligations fall under two categories: Understandable (their meanings and wisdoms can be realized by reasoning) and not understandable (unexplained).

On the other hand, including the nation as a framework for considering purposes, it was quite relevant that Ibn `Âshûr separated the purposes from the rulings pertaining to the Hereafter, on the basis that the Hereafter is a retribution for individuals' deeds. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***And every one of them will come to Him alone on the Day of Resurrection.***﴾ [Maryam (Mary): 95]

Accordingly, he wrote about the nation, revealing that the collective retribution of the nation is in this world and that the responsibility for what the nation carries out is a collective one. This is demonstrated by the Qur'anic Verse:

﴿***And fear a trial that will not exclusively strike those who do wrong among you.***﴾ [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 25]

Further, he believed that the intentions and purposes of individuals cannot be included when forming collective rulings. That is why Ibn `Âshûr described the heavenly legislation as the "code of the nation".

Obviously, when the individual is taken as the framework of purposes (the approach of Ash-Shâtibî), it is natural that the scale of devotion or the unexplained increases. The individual is obligated to suppress his desires and be sincere in his devotion, even if he does not know the exact wisdom behind the acts of worship, orders and prohibitions which he is required to follow.

The more a *Shar'î* order goes beyond the individual level to a national or large-scale one, the more it is explained and the more scholars can address public interest and the underlying purposes and wisdom. No one can deny the meanings and benefits behind Muslims' gathering for prayers,

(1) Ibid., p. 10.

Al-Jumu'ah (i.e. Friday) prayer, feasts, *Zakâh* (i.e. obligatory charity given to the poor), charity, kindness with relatives, consoling patients, relieving those in pain, etc.

In this way, when the public interests of Muslims in their daily life are completely secured and organized, the range of the unexplained will be narrowed or even brought to an end. This (the unexplained) is more correlated with the individual worship that Ibn `Âshûr chose to call "religious piety", differentiating it from the *Sharî'ah* which he attributed to the national level.

With issues at the national-level, the range of the so-called "unexplained" is substantially narrowed. Social issues are based on interests, which is by nature understandable; humans use their minds to understand and evaluate the potential benefits of matters, capitalizing on the realistic Heavenly regulations.

The Highest Purpose of the Islamic *Sharî'ah:*

By surveying the Qur'anic verses pertaining to the Islamic nation and its mission, we can derive a comprehensive definition of the highest purpose of the *Sharî'ah*; one that includes the national dimension and the collective obligations of the nation. The highest purpose of the *Sharî'ah* is "to create a nation that assimilates the requirements of faith and has a presence strong enough to accomplish the missions of being a witness[1], establishing irrefutable arguments[2] and attracting others to respect and embrace Islam. It should be a nation that can make the world better, for all people to live without suffering, enjoy peace and love, and seek development and welfare".

All the ideas emphasized in this definition are implied in the thoughts of Ibn `Âshûr (may Allah confer mercy upon him). In fact, he did not combine them all in his personal definition, but they can be found separately throughout his writings. In view of the definition above, a good quality of life for all people is possible if they pursue the spiritual values that correct and organize the person's relationship with his Creator and with the universe around him. A happy life is possible with peace, co-existence and

(1) In the Noble Qur'ân, Allah, Exalted be He, says: *{"Thus We have made you (O true Muslims) a median (i.e. the best) nation, that you will be witnesses over humankind (on the Day of Judgment)..."}* [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143].

(2) Allah, Exalted be He, says: *{"... So that people may have no argument against you (i.e. can find no evidence that you Muslims are wrong)..."}* [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 150].

development. It is such a life where religion can thrive and inspire human creativity to its potential.

When the purpose of the Islamic *Sharî'ah* is understood this way, the collective and individual obligations will be just representations of the requirements to re-form the Islamic nation according to the Qur'anic guidelines (from the real core of belief, i.e. the witness and testimony that there is no god but Allah, to the slightest sign of benevolence and considerateness, i.e. to remove any harm from people's paths). When this purpose is internalized, the whole world will become the scope of attention for every Muslim; he will focus on his personal duties and conducts while taking other "fellow humans" into consideration.

Such a Muslim will attach a lot of importance to the practical objectives and actual effects of all the *Shar'î* obligations and rulings. This comprehensive understanding of the *Sharî'ah* is hopefully the determinant to enable Islamic discourse to leave the literalistic and theoretical boundaries which confine it, which make it lose its influence and open the door to spread malicious thoughts and behavior.

Insights into Reality:

Regarding the second part of the crisis of Islamic discourse (i.e. failure to understand and deal with reality), it is important to highlight the fact that the demand to understand reality does not mean to take it as being natural or absolutely right, denying any higher values. In fact, it is this wrong perception that gave Islamic discourse its idealistic and ivory-tower form, making it focus only on how things should be, not how it is possible for them to be in reality. So, Islamic discourse was governed by a selective, shallow and unrealistic mentality.

We advocate for a new strategy of looking at the real world, in order to work out how to apply the desired values and make it a better world. Here are some points that can help obtain a *Shar'î* insight into reality and how to deal with it.

The Qur'anic way of representing rulings implies a very realistic approach, one that never ignores the conditions of the people intended by the rulings at hand. None of the decrees and obligations contained in the Glorious Qur'ân is isolated from the factual circumstances. Taking the conditions of reality into consideration is a crucial feature of the *Shar'î* rulings.

For example, the Qur'anic verses concerning the fasting of Ramadân also include what to do in case of travel or illness. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿... ***But whoever among you is ill or on a journey (during the days of ritual fast), then (he does not have to perform the fast and should make up) an equal number (of days) on other days (when there is no travel or illness)...*** ﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 184]

Similarly, just after the verses concerning *Hajj* (i.e. Pilgrimage), the Qur'ân shows the ruling on the ritual of having one's hair cut in case of illness. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿... ***And do not shave your heads until the sacrifice has reached its place of slaughter. And whoever among you is ill or has an ailment in the head (necessitating shaving, should offer) a sacrifice of fasting (three days), charity (feeding six poor persons) or sacrifice (one sheep)...*** ﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 196]

By the same token, the clause that reveals the imperativeness of performing *As-Salâh* (i.e. prayers) during their specified times is stated in the verse concerned about the special circumstance of performing prayer in times of danger. The verse reads: ﴿... ***But when you become secure, re-establish (regular) prayer. Indeed, prayer is decreed upon the believers at fixed times."}*** ﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 103]

Furthermore, the determination of the religiously prohibited sorts of food is directly and repeatedly followed by the instruction to take into account the circumstances in which this ruling applies. Allah says: ﴿***Prohibited to you are dead animals, blood, the flesh of swine, and that which has been dedicated to other than Allah... But whoever is forced by severe hunger with no inclination to sin (can eat these above mentioned types of meat), then surely, Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*** ﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 3]

In all these examples, the Qur'ân draws attention to the necessity of considering the overall situation and avoiding generalizations. It would not be dutiful to ignore facts and make up an imaginary picture of the real world.

Actually, this would be disregard the true state of affairs and makes the advocates of Islamic discourse seem too meticulous and over-demanding. Among the biggest features of the Islamic *Sharî'ah* is that its rulings were established gradually. This is demonstrated by the Qur'anic verses that do not include the final, absolute rulings of the subjects under

concern. This reflects an interesting realistic approach and emphasizes the importance of considering people's conditions when helping them reach the perfect state, which is the aim of the final rulings. The rulings on alcohol, gambling, inheritance, legal penalties and *Jihâd* (i.e. fighting in Allah's Cause) all are clear examples of the gradual establishment of rulings in the Qur'ân and how it takes reality into account when applying legislations.

In Chapter 13 of *Al-Muwâfaqât*, Imâm Ash-Shâtibî indicated that one of the features of such well-considered *Shar'î* rulings is that it is in line with reality and that whatever is not consistent with reality cannot be considered a *Shar'î* fundamental, stating that when such consistency is not observed, the subsequent judgment may be liable to error. To prove this principle, he presented some informative examples showing how to understand and interpret the Qur'anic verses without ignoring or contradicting reality. An example of this is the verse: ﴿... ***And never will Allah give the disbelievers a way (to triumph) over the believers.***﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 141]

In this regard, Ash-Shâtibî wrote, "If the verse is interpreted as a statement, then its meaning will not be always true, since there are many instances when the disbelievers conquer the Muslims. So, it should be interpreted in light of the facts of reality and the relevant context of giving a *Shar'î* ruling (i.e. Do not give the disbelievers a way to triumph over you)".

In another part of *Al-Muwâfaqât*, Imâm Ash-Shâtibî stated that examining the results of actions is an important *Shar'î* objective. It would be wrong to say that something is generally lawful if it can lead to harm equal to, or more than, the benefit which is sought. Likewise, it would be wrong to say that something is generally unlawful if its prevention can lead to harm equal to, or more than, the adverse effect which is avoided.

The great scholar Ibn Khaldûn frequently stressed the importance of referring to the natural state of matters when verifying the truth of reported information. He pointed out, "The basic rule when distinguishing which reports are truthful and which are false, in terms of possibility or impossibility, is to consider the society and determine its normal circumstances as well as any possible circumstances and those which are impossible. By doing so, we will have a criterion to ascertain whether we are told is true or not."

In another context, Ibn Khaldûn mentioned that it is historically dishonest to be forgetful of the fact that conditions change over years. This historical inaccuracy is extremely dangerous, since it takes a long time to

occur and thus it is very difficult to observe. The conditions, customs and traditions of nations differ with the passage of time. Change is the first law of the universe.

Ibn Khaldûn pioneered sociology by grasping the fluctuating and fixed aspects of reality. He realized the importance of being connected with reality when trying to influence it. At the same time, he argued against the literalistic methodology of history which unrealistically approaches past events and lessons, overlooking the temporal and spatial dimensions of mankind.

Imâm Al-Ghazâlî pointed out that the existence of any matter has 4 levels: Its intrinsic reality, the form it conjures in the mind, the sounds that represent it, and the visual symbols that refer to its written name.

He wrote, "It should be known that anyone who seeks out the meanings from words will go nowhere; it is like moving away from the West while one wants to go there. However, when you first decide on the meaning in your mind and then use the relevant words, then you are acting correctly."

Mr. Gawdat Sa`îd, in his book Iqra' (Read), commented, "This is a highly sophisticated concept that needs to be reexamined and simplified, by explaining the first level of existence, called 'the intrinsic reality' in Al- Ghazâlî's words, and 'the outer/material existence' as Ibn Taymiyyah described it. Thunder, for example, has an outer existence represented by the rumble that we hear after watching the flash of lightening. This outer existence is the reality of thunder. Nevertheless, the mental images that people form about thunder (the same applies to lightening, the sun, plants, animals, etc.) are very different. Thus, we can say that the outer

existence of physical objects has its actual reality, but people's notions of it vary according to their cultural background. This is what makes people different from inanimate cameras and recording devices; things have different perceptions for different people. This is the relation between the outer existence and mental images: The outer existence is the constant factor, so that when its interpretations are different we bring it into focus and put it under scrutiny to correct the various mental images it assumes. This is what we wanted to underline in our comment on the thoughts of Imâm Al-Ghazâlî regarding this subject."

When we consider this opinion, we find it identical to the opinion of Imâm Ash-Shâtibî (may Allah confer mercy upon him) that reality is the determinant that is considered to know the correctness of our

understanding of texts. The *Shar'î* texts should not be interpreted in a way that contradicts the facts of reality. We should try to hit a balance between abstract values and practical considerations. This way, we will be able to better human life, encouraging others to follow the pure Islamic teachings, and avoid problems of misunderstanding.

In *I'lâm Al-Muwaqqi'în* (Informing *Muftis*), Imâm Ibnul-Qayyim (may Allah confer mercy upon him) commented on the message sent by 'Umar Ibnul-Khattâb (may Allah be pleased with him) to Abû Mûsâ Al-Ash'arî on the functions of judiciary, saying, "Give top priority to the investigation of whatever you are told." Ibnul-Qayyim wrote, "Neither a *Mufti* nor a ruler can practice their functions properly unless they have two kinds of understanding: First, the understanding of reality and inference of facts from the available evidence and clues; and second, the understanding of what should be done with that reality (i.e. the judgments given by Allah, through His Book or His Messenger, concerning that specific reality) and then matching them together."

Through the previous overview, we can outline the real notion of renewal which is necessary to bale Islamic discourse out of its troubles. It is imperative to establish the *Shar'î* values and principles stated in the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, understand their practical applications in the days of the Prophet (PBUH) (taking into consideration the circumstances and conditions of the time), and deduce the *Fiqh* of "correlation" (i.e. the practical methodology of matching the values and principles with the contemporary conditions of reality) substantiated by the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions.

Once that functional methodology is fully understood, there should be a complete awareness of today's reality and circumstances. With these two factors, the process of reform will be carried out on real (not imaginary) social, economic and political grounds.

A successful discourse is that which is carried out using a good, purposive mentality which combines texts, culture and reality in a well-balanced way. Renewal is a creative effort to come up with effective methods to improve life in accordance with the eternal Heavenly teachings and principles.

On the other hand, any attempts to take the norms and perceptions of the distant past and apply them to recent times, ignoring the changing nature of life, will lead only to failure.

An observer of the problems of life and the attempts of Islamic discourse to deal with them will find much haste and little patience when people address and consider reality, relying on generalities and slogans taken supposedly to be comprehensive and absolute. In such a case, results turn out to be too poor to contribute to the development of thought, the improvement of conditions or the formulation of a discourse that employs the Islamic *Sharî'ah* as it is intended by Allah: A mercy for all mankind.

Dealing with reality as described above is possible when every aspect of life is administered by its specialized community. As for the *Shar'î* scholars, it should be mentioned that the academic and practical prepa ration of students in the faculties of *Sharî'ah* all over the Islamic world is severed from reality, oriented to the past and inattentive to the emergent affairs of life.

If scholars say that one of the prerequisites of assuming judiciary functions is to have knowledge of the requirements of reality, would it not be natural to ask about what methods and tools of understanding reality the *Sharî'ah* learners are taught and trained on as part of their undergraduate courses of education?

When the answer is an emphatic "there is none", as the *Sharî'ah* teachers say themselves, then confidence needs to be restored in the general Muslim public. Not everyone who did not study the Islamic *Sharî'ah* the traditional way is unreliable. The whole nation, regardless of the professions of its members, is the criterion for the quality of Islamic discourse and its ability to crystallize emotions of citizenship and responsibility.

Contemporary Islamic Discourse
Renovation and Elimination

Prof. Muhammad Sayyâh Al-Ma'arrâwî(*)

Nowadays, the Muslims are oppressed. They face a hardheaded opponent who does not want to undertake a dialogue leading to mutual convincement derived from the most probable proof and the most certain argument. Rather, this very opponent enforces a course that leads to a previously-drafted conclusion. Indeed, this is the most grotesque manipulation of the principles of philosophy and sound logic. This is due to the fact that conclusions should be reached through clear rational arguments, not through methods of repugnant constraint.

Introduction:

Recently and repeatedly, there has been a pressing demand for the "Renovation of Religious Discourse." The demand is intended for the "Islamic Discourse" in particular, though the issue is generally raised in the form of "Religious Discourse".

This issue is not new on the arena of Islamic thought. In fact, it has been raised in one way or another for a long time. I might present or rather remind you of some attempts that occurred at the end of the Nineteenth Century and the beginning of the Twentieth Century. They are as follows:

(*) Syrian Researcher.

1- The attempts by Sheikh Jamâl Ad-Dîn Al-Afghânî and his disciple Sheikh Muhammad `Abdu.
2- The attempt by Sheikh `Alî `Abdur-Râziq in his book 'Islam and the Principles of Ruling'.
3- The attempt by Qâsim Amîn in his book 'Liberation of Women' and 'The New Woman'.

Many other attempts occurred, some of which approached the right path while most of them deviated from it.

Afterwards, the attempts towards renovation lingered until the second half of the Twentieth Century, when the issue was raised once more in a new, different style. Perhaps the aim was to benefit from the previous experiences and reformulate them in a different way.

In the late Nineteenth Century and the early Twentieth Century, people were still influenced by a kind of inherited Islam that originated from their feelings and minds. This concept made any attempt to re-contemplate the discourse in the light of reviewing and re-evaluating the cognitive heritage that initially formed it as an attempt questionable beforehand and spontaneously rejected by a society that was not yet ready to accept criticism of its heritage, be it sound or not. Therefore, the attempts made by Al-Afghânî and Muhammad `Abdu were somewhat acceptable with little opposition or conservation while the attempts by `Alî `Abdur-Râziq and Qâsim Amîn were rejected with little approval or acceptance.

However, the perspective towards the issue did not remain the same due to several elements that penetrated into the society. Some of these elements enlightened and guided people to the right whereas others deviated them from the proper way of thinking and made them incline towards aberration, causing dissensions and misinterpretations.

Had it not been for the different forms of culture of the non-Muslims that penetrated our traditional cognitive status, this would not have happened. The non-Muslim culture has affected our culture in a seemingly enlightening way while it is in reality intended to consolidate a methodology that serves its own purposes. It aims to cause a state of misunderstanding between Islam and the Muslims and thus be able to drive us away from the "Islamic Discourse" and isolate it. It also aims to reshape the Muslim intellect anew so as to believe that in order to achieve progress in civilization and avoid the state of retardation – in which we undeniably

suffer – we have to exclude religion from our worldly life and confine its influence, for any who do believe in it, to the affairs of the Hereafter.

The culture of non-Muslims is represented by the secular way of life for which a localized Arabic term is given, although it is devoid of any terminological implication. The term is *'Almâniyyah* (secularism). In fact, the word *'Almâniyyah* is derived from the root *'Ilm* (i.e., knowledge). It is obvious as well that this way of life has nothing to do with knowledge or science in any respect. On the contrary, it is a way that resulted from battles between politicians and clergymen in Europe due to the dispute over the power of controlling the affairs of life. The Church continued to control both the religious and worldly authorities at the same time although there was no legislation in this regard mentioned in the Gospel it adhered to and used as its guidance. Politicians, on the other hand, denied the Church such right of leadership, believing that its authority should not exceed the affairs of the Hereafter. Also, they claimed that the worldly affairs should be in the hands of competent authorities without any intervention in the name of God as He did not send down legislation to organize the affairs of the worldly life. They believed that the Gospels accredited in the Council of Niceae in 325 A.D. were abounded with sermons, commandments and the biography of Christ without mentioning anything related to the organization of people's relations with each other or with the ruling authority outside the frame of preaching and guiding them to do good deeds. Even the accredited Gospels asserted exhorting people not to intervene in the authorities of the ruler (Caesar). This is clear in the saying, "Render to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and render to God what belongs to God."

In this manner of concealing the truth about a method by using terms that do not thoroughly and accurately refer to it, our culture has been penetrated by different calls to renounce everything that is divine and ask people to adhere to only materialistic knowledge. Direct and indirect allusions have spread to indicate that there is a kind of contradiction between religion and science on the basis that religion is based on divine unknown matters whereas science depends upon senses and observation in accordance with the precise laws of matter.

Those adopting this way of thinking are astray, or let us say they lead others astray. They either have not studied the cognitive system of Islam, and thus they apply their struggle with the Church to Islam, or they have

studied the Islamic cognitive system, but they want to deny any scientific, civilized and legislative superiority of Islam, although they are not comparable even by a small amount.

Considering this emergent status of Islamic thought and its culture, it has become easy to argue against the "Islamic Discourse" on the basis of the rapid progress and development of material knowledge while Islam, with its discourse and discourse-related sciences, linger in the past. This has led the Islamic society to lag behind and be unable to catch up with the modern civilization.

This is a baseless falsehood or rather ignorance of Islam. This is because there are reasons for the state of backwardness – which we cannot deny – that have nothing to do with the Islamic discourse, whether written specifically or implied from its texts. Moreover, if there were an inverse relationship between "Islamic Discourse" and the material scientific advancement in the Western world, we would not have witnessed the Malaysian model and its superiority over the Western world in various fields, particularly in the field of information technology, a symbol of progress in the world of today.

Further, if this was the case, we would not have witnessed the Pakistani model which managed to be among the countries which rightly held a place in the nuclear tribune in spite of all the obstacles placed in its way.

Actually, if we are to mention the Islamic examples of advancement, we will need pages and pages.

The Islamic discourse is not lessons and explanations of mathematics, chemistry, physiology or medicine, even though it calls for the study of such sciences as an obligation on every individual in some cases and as a collective one in other cases.

Rather, the Islamic discourse is intended to regulate people's relations with their Creator, with each other and with the universe they observe, live in, and make use of its wealth granted to them by the Creator. This involves motivating people to progress and develop by examining and discovering the visible and invisible facts existing in the universe and dealing with it in accordance with the laws enacted by the Creator; Allah, Glory be to Him, Who urges them to identify and use it in a way that achieves welfare and happiness for all humanity.

Back to the issue of backwardness, there are many other reasons for advancement and backwardness to which I refer in a book that will be published soon, Allah willing. These reasons cannot be summarized in this study since this will not serve the intended purpose.

In this introduction, I just want to indicate and outline some features through which the call for renewing Islamic discourse, including its two facets, can be correctly perceived. These two facets involve:

a- The one required by the Islamic methodology itself.

b- The one proposed from outside.

In this regard, there is a significant difference between both facets: The first leads to renewal while the second presents the most grotesque forms of dissipation which can not be prevented except by the promise of Allah, the Almighty, Who says:

﴿***Indeed, it is We Who sent down the Message (the Qur'ân) and indeed We will be its guardian.***﴾ [Al-Hijr (Thamûd's Habitation):9]

Allah also says:

﴿***But Allah will never fail in His promise.***﴾ [Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage):47]

- Defining Terms:

The Islamic discourse is an important issue that represents the case of sanctity which is inculcated into the souls and minds of its adherents who devoutly pursue its guidance. Hence, any confusion resulting from misunderstanding the terms conveying the content of such a discourse may place the researcher seeking to renew the Islamic discourse as well as the recipient in an avoidable confrontation as to the conformity between the intended message of this discourse on one side, and the recipient's understanding of that message on the other side. Such confrontation may also result from the lack of conformity due to discrepancy in the soundness of the textual structure and the intended meaning. Moreover, the more the wording of the discourse is able to carry the meaning precisely and firmly, and the more the understanding of this meaning is based on a sound perception, the more the purpose of the contemporary Islamic discourse is served.

This requires us to determine the accurate meanings conveyed by the terms we use in this study as follows:

1. The Term "Contemporary Islamic Discourse":

This term involves a type of discourse which is described by two adjectives: Islamic and contemporary. Thereby, the first indication distinguishing this discourse concerns two points:

a- It is an "Islamic discourse," not any other religious discourse.

b- It is a "contemporary Islamic discourse" and not the other kinds of discourse ascribed to the *Salaf* (i.e., early Muslim scholars). Accordingly, this indication, as previously illustrated, shows the dilemma and flaws related to the formulation of the intended term.

To illustrate, Islamic discourse does not differ over time so that it can be labeled as being "contemporary" or "old". Rather, Islamic discourse is distinguished from other kinds of discourse by being represented by the "Divine Revelation" (i.e., the Qur'ân) sent down to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) as well as the Prophetic *Sunnah* which interprets this Divine Revelation. In this regard, Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿And We revealed to you the Message (the Qur'ân) that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees): 44]

However, though this term is used wrongly, it is usually used to refer to "the understanding of Islamic discourse," "the discourse of Islamic *Fiqh*" or "the discourse of Muslim scholars regarding its interpretation and clarification." The difference between the three kinds is obvious.

While the term "Islamic discourse" refers – when used correctly – to a Divine authority, the other aforementioned terms incorporate a human reference regarding the understanding of this discourse. That is, the comprehension of the discourse – despite the necessity of being based on indications of a Divine discourse – cannot be but a human understanding that is influenced by human factors, such as mastering the language of the discourse, which is Arabic, at its highest levels and being competent to deduce the rulings from their proofs through the texts of the discourse, be it the Glorious Qur'ân or the *Sunnah*.

There are other constituents and instruments of understanding. That is why we consider the diversity of *Fiqhî* schools as a normal situation.

To illustrate, the *Imâms'* ways of understanding, though identical in most rulings and interpretations, differ in some cases due to the diversity of the cognitive processes of each of them as well as their abilities to analyze,

synthesize and compare between the denotation of two similar or related expressions.

All these matters are human elements bestowed by Allah, the Almighty, upon His servants so that the diversity of the *Imâms'* ways of understanding becomes a mercy for all humans due to the various and flexible answers provided by this diversity of understanding. Consequently, these flexible answers remove any possible harm or hardship. Through realizing these meanings of the term "contemporary Islamic discourse", the description "contemporary" is acceptable as it refers to "human understanding" which is influenced by the ever-changing factors of time and place.

Here, the issue that coincides with the term "Islamic discourse" is how to "renew" it. This term is actually presented and tackled in the writings of thinkers and researchers under the title "renewing the contemporary Islamic discourse". It is sometimes presented in a different way by substituting the term "religious" instead of the term "Islamic". However, the intended meaning in most researches and proposals always turns to "Islamic discourse". This requires us to tackle the concept of the term "renewing".

2. The Term "Renewing":

a- Introducing the Term:

Everything initially exists as new, and then it becomes "old" after moments, days, months and years. The two descriptions "new" and "old" refer to time since the difference between them results from the existence of one before another. Time changes things and alters it from new to old.

Arabic linguists use the term "new" to refer to modern things. In Arabic, the word "new" refers to something that is not existent yet.

Because of this correlation between the term "renew" and the term "modernize," those who call for renewing the Islamic discourse use any of them to convey the same meaning.

b- The Term: Specification and Generalization:

After this interpretation of the term, is it right to call for a renewal of "Islamic discourse" away from the generality of "religious discourse"? I have pointed out, while explaining the term "Islamic discourse," that some writers and thinkers may confuse the discourse of the noble Islamic texts represented in the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (PBUH) with the understanding of "the Islamic discourse," "the discourse of Islamic

Fiqh" or "the discourse of Muslim scholars regarding its interpretation and clarification."

As for the first type of discourse (the holy Islamic texts), it is a divine one that cannot be described as new or modern. That is, it is as eternal as its Maker Himself (Allah, Exalted be He) because it is Allah's own words which are neither new nor modern. Otherwise; these words would be considered "created" as the *Mutazilites* alleged and eluded others into this claim. In this regard, the catastrophic dissension of "the creation of the Noble Qur'ân" is well-known and it is amongst the major philosophic issues with which Muslim scholars and *Imâms* have been afflicted since the time of Caliph Al-Ma'mûn. Some of the effects of this dissension are still prevalent among us till now. Furthermore, some thinkers who are sincere to Allah, Glory be to Him, to His Book (the Qur'ân) and to His Messenger (PBUH) still monitor the phenomenon of reverting to the time of dissension due to the different ideas and claims that penetrate the doctrinal system of Islam. The infiltrators attempt, as much as possible, to write about these issues, deliver lectures and participate in discussions and dialogues in order to establish their own ideas and calls using their utmost available capabilities such as mass media.

Unfortunately, many scholars whom Allah, Glory be to Him, has granted a great deal of science and knowledge and established them as the heirs of the prophets abstain, without any acceptable reason, from tackling this phenomenon and refuting it.

As for the second type of discourse (i.e., the one related to scholars), the call for renewing is a basic requirement in the methodology of forming Islamic thought by encouraging the development of research, thinking, and methods of consideration and evaluation across the ages and generations.

Some advocates of renewal and modernity attempt to propagate and work to consolidate, in order to make understanding easier, the fact that "Islamic discourse" is originally "divine" before revelation and "human" after revelation. By doing so, they try to disregard two unchangeable principles: "the sacredness of the Islamic texts" and "the transient nature of the Islamic texts."

Now it is time to tackle the concept of "Islamic discourse" and call for renewing it using the very perspective founded by Islam concerning continuous reconsideration and evaluation.

The Islamic Approach of Renewal:

Islam's approach of renewal is built on two bases:

(1) The First Basis: It is derived from the Glorious Qur'ân. It is represented by inviting and encouraging others to practice activities that make the "discourse" embodied in the divine text and its explanation by the Prophet (PBUH) a constant factual discourse upheld by means of scientific research that does not approve of any scientific result except after using it.

In this relation, a phenomenon that cannot be understood except through using these methods, starting with frequent processes of consideration and reconsideration to avoid falling into any illusion or mistake, undergoes rational deliberations that involve comparing different phenomena and deducing logical results after studying issues so that a researcher eventually ends up with facts.

While this is imperative to understand visible universal phenomena, the invisible ones are accepted due to the limitless trust of the Islamic discourse in its sacred texts (i.e., the Qur'ân) and their interpretation (i.e., the *Sunnah*), after the interpretation has been proved to be authentic.

The Islamic discourse is not satisfied with just the facts that have been established in a certain age as being the truth without any review; rather, it encourages continuous research and consideration across all the ages and generations. Here are some examples of the Divine texts:

1. Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***Do they not look into the realm of the heavens and the earth and everything that Allah has created and (think) that perhaps their appointed time has come near? So in what statement (message) hereafter will they believe?***﴾ [Al-`Arâf (The Battlements): 185]

Is there a more unequivocal incentive to contemplate?! Unless they (i.e., the believers) resort to contemplation, which is the primary means of knowing facts, they will not believe in the need to carry out any search for any fact.

2. Allah, the Most High, says:

﴿ ***My verses used to be recited to you, but you used to turn back on your heels. In arrogance regarding it, conversing by night, speaking evil (about the Qur'an). Have they not reflected over the words (the Qur'ân), or has there come to them that which had not come to their forefathers.***﴾ [Al-Mu`minûn (The Believers): 66-68]

Is there a more sarcastic than this for those who prefer night conversations, entertainment and wasting time instead of reflecting over Allah's Verses which are recited to them?!

3. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿ ***Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and the alternation of the night and the day are signs for those of understanding, who remember Allah while standing or sitting or lying on their sides and give thought to the creation of the heavens and the earth, (saying), "Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are you (above such a thing); protect us from the punishment of the Fire.*** ﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 190 and 191]

The above-mentioned verses in the Suras of Al-A'râf and Al-Mu'minûn depict the situation and fate of the group of people who do not contemplate the realm of the heavens and the earth as well as everything that Allah, Glory be to Him, has created. They prefer night conversations, entertainment and wasting time. On the other hand, those who rightly and truthfully believe in Allah and His Books remember Allah whenever and wherever they reflect on the creation of the heavens and the earth. As a result, they come to the fact that Allah, Exalted be He, has created the universe for certain purposes and objectives and that He has not created it aimlessly.

Afterwards, they declare the truth they have reached saying (as mentioned in the Qur'ân):

﴿ ***Our Lord, You did not create this aimlessly; exalted are you (above such a thing); protect us from the punishment of the Fire.*** ﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 191]

This is a matchless, eloquent expression as Allah, the Most High, associated the remembrance (of Allah) with contemplation followed by acknowledgement and belief, then the fear from the torment of the Hellfire in case the people deviate from the facts of the universe which they ascertained through consideration, meditation and thinking.

4. Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***Indeed, within the heavens and the earth are signs for the believers.***﴾

﴾*And in the creation of yourselves and what He disperses of moving creatures are signs for people who are certain (in faith).*﴿

﴾*And (in) the alternation of night and day and (in) what Allah sends down from the sky of provision (rain) and gives life thereby to the earth after its lifelessness and (in His) directing of the winds are signs for a people who think logically.*﴿

[Al-Jâthiyah (The Kneeling): 3-5]

Do you notice the great eloquence of the discourse in this Qur'anic text composed of three verses? Each one addressing a different type of individual, but all of them reaching the same conclusions, which are the objectives of the discourse. This can be illustrated as follows:

The First Verse is directed to the believers to acquaint them with the fact that the heavens and the earth contain signs of belief, credence and submission.

The Second Verse is directed to people who believe that their creation as well as the creation of any living creature is an apparent evidence of the Creator.

The Third Verse is directed to those who use their minds to understand the alternation of night and day, the sending down of rain from the sky to revive the earth after its lifelessness, and the power directing the winds. Thus, these people reach a sound understanding by using their minds.

The aim of the aforementioned Qur'anic text is to convey the discourse to the addressees in a sound and correct way. Accordingly, they can understand the significance of this discourse through understanding, since the will of the One who is addressing them is in accordance with that of the 'addressee'. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴾*Say, with Allah is the far-reaching (conclusive) argument. If He had willed, He would have guided you all.*﴿ [Al-An`âm (Cattle): 149]

(2) The Second Basis: It is like the first as it is derived from the Prophetic interpretation of the Divine Text (i.e., the Qur'ân). This interpretation includes the following points:

a- It emphasizes continual consideration and reconsideration so as to keep the Islamic discourse new and away from extrinsic additions or distorting omissions. The Prophetic interpretation also conveys the Divine Promise of being preserved.

b- It sets a methodology and a plan for the aforementioned deliberations so that they cannot be manipulated or used for undesired purposes.

In this regard, I offer two Prophetic *Hadîths* that comprehensively and concisely explain this issue.

The First *Hadîth*: The Prophet (PBUH) said: «*At the end of every one hundred years, Allah raises up in this nation someone who will renew the religion for it.*»[1]

This *Hadîth* lays down the foundation of renewal and reconsideration. It is not associated with the willingness or choice of humans since its wording implies that the matter is destined by Divine Providence, so it will inevitably occur.

It is not rational or discrete to consider the "year" (mentioned in the *Hadîth*) according to its calendar meaning; rather, we should consider it in its indicative implication which refers to periods in the progress line of societies. Such periods are referred to in the *Hadîth* as one hundred years in the sense of indicating a short, but not a precise, period of time.

Furthermore, the phrase «*at the end of every one hundred years*» denotes that one hundred years will not pass without a scholar being sent to this nation in order to renew the religion for it. Allah knows best.

Even if the phrase "one hundred years" is meant to indicate a precise period of time, it is not a long time in the life of societies and their intellectual and ideological development. Actually, one hundred years may hardly be enough for a son to receive knowledge from his father or a disciple from his Sheikh.

Moreover, the *Hadîth* does not determine that only one person will undertake the mission of renewing the religion at the end of every one hundred years. That is, the more the Islamic nation expands in time and place the more the need for a greater number of scholars is. Also, the text of this *Hadîth* implies this since the pronoun "someone" may signify a number of scholars that is sufficient for performing the mission, not only one scholar.

The mission required from this qualified, competent scholar (or scholars) is so clear and specific; it is to renew the religion for the Muslim Nation.

(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd, Al-Hâkim and Al-Bayhaqî.

Depending on the understanding of the reference to "renewal" mentioned in this noble *Hadîth*, many significant impacts on the course of Islamic thought are determined. To illustrate, consider the following:

a- It is not acceptable at all to perceive the phrase *"renew the religion for it"* as allowing the establishment of a new religion. Neither the *Hadîth* nor the Arabic language with its grammar and morphology intend or approve of such an understanding. Additionally, the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH), their followers and the prominent Imâms in the nation have never comprehended this *Hadîth* in this way. However, a few people aim at penetrating the Islamic discourse under the pretext of calling for renewal while they, in fact, aim at devising and disseminating a new religion, claiming that the texts of the discourse have become human since they have been revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and, therefore, they are no longer Divine. [1]

It is easy to discuss and refute such an allegation. Yet, this issue would take up much space to discuss and study it that may affect other issues.

For more information on this topic, the reader may see the book entitled *"Al-Marxlamiyyah wa Al-Qur'ân"* (Marxislamism and the Qur'ân) which comprehensively rebuts this allegation.

b- Renewal, according to its correct meaning as mentioned earlier, is to make something already existing new again by removing whatever may have altered it of additions and restoring whatever may have altered it of omissions.

The threatening brought forward by those targeting Islamic discourse under the pretext of renewal is the relation between "renewal" from one side and "heritage" from another. Their writings always link renewal with heritage in a way suggesting that heritage is the greatest obstacle before the process of renewal. This indicates a total ignorance of the concept of heritage and a clear inability to promote renewal without devising an enemy to justify their call.

It is very clear that heritage represents the memory of every nation concerning all the various aspects that form that memory. Heritage also is one of the most important elements in the formation of nations' civilizations. Thereupon, every nation's civilization and heritage cannot be free of negative and positive features.

(1) See other writers in this book who have tackled this topic in details.

Heritage should not be regarded as an idol to be worshipped or a dirty worn out garment which a nation abstains from wearing as the memory of the civilization which justifies and explains the outputs of this civilization, including its culture, literature, law and arts.

As for the Islamic case, heritage is one of the issues that comply with the Islamic methodology of renewal which has been laid down by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in the following *Hadîth*:

The Second *Hadîth*: The Prophet (PBUH) said: «*This knowledge shall be carried by the most just in every generation, who will remove from it (I) the misinterpretation of the ignorant, (II) the deception of the falsifiers and (III) the distortion of the extremists.* »(1)

With regard to the *Hadîth*, the worst matters that may afflict Islamic discourse with regard to its Divine Text and Prophetic interpretation of this Text (i.e., the *Sunnah*) arise mainly from one of three factors: ignorance, falsification or extremism. Furthermore, the ignorant, the falsifiers or the extremists may commit these evil matters having a good intention and out of zeal and care for Islam. Contrarily, these matters may also be done with the purpose of taking the Islamic discourse away from guidance to misguidance. In support of this, we can cite many forms of the two cases which Islam has witnessed.

The greatest evidence of this is the example of the Kharijites (Seceders) as to the issue of arbitration between `Alî and Mu`âwiyah (concerning the selection of a new Caliph). No one can accuse the Kharijites of disbelief as they perform the obligations established by Islam, be they textually commanded or forbidden. Yet, their wrong understanding of the Qur'anic Text led them to aggressively adhere to the literality of the text. This adherence led them to a wrong interpretation that was closer to ignorance than knowledge regarding the text's indication. This resulted in dissension among the Muslims. Unfortunately, we still suffer from this dissension until now.

Because extremism leads to a distorted understanding of Islamic discourse in both the text and interpretation, such a phenomenon is too clear to be hidden. Moreover, as soon as extremists appear at any certain time, they are refuted and overcome by contemporary scholars, so extremism is

(1) Related by Al-Hâfiz Al-`Alâlî in "Goal of Seekers" (in Arabic) and Imâm Ahmad on the authority of Mu`âz from Al-Qâsim Ibn `Abdur-Rahmân. It has been deemed as a Sahîh (Authentic) Hadîth by Al-Albânî in "The Niche of Lamps" (in Arabic).

diminished, matters are restored to their right positions, and extremists are bounded. The event of the Kharijites is a good example that proves this.

In the battle between the Divine Islamic texts and interpretation on one side and those aiming to dissociate Islamic discourse from its Divine reference and associate it with the concept of human texts on the other side, there are a lot of supporters and opponents. Some people claim to perfectly understand Islam, but the fact is that they cannot correctly read or understand one verse of the Divine Text (i.e., the Qur'ân) or even deduce its implication in a right way. When they are asked about a simple question in *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) or Arabic grammar, for example, which are necessary qualities for any Islamic knowledge seeker to become a Muslim scholar, they will deny your question, mistakenly answer it or make excuses to cover up their ignorance. However, they give themselves the right to issue *Fatwas* (legal opinions) without even being asked for them. They also give testimonies without being asked to do so. The Prophet (PBUH) warned us against similar people who will appear when the springs of knowledge will have dried out among the people due to the death of scholars. The Prophet said: «*...Until when none of the scholars remains, people will take as their leaders ignorant persons who, when consulted, will give their verdict without knowledge. So they will go astray and will lead people astray.*»[1]

Hence, how is the case when such people and their likes appear when qualified scholars are still present, as is happening today?

According to Islamic history, `Abdullah Ibn `Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) documented the presence of such people in his time. He said: «*We lived through periods of our age when each one of us would have faith before learning the Glorious Qur'ân. When a Sura of Qur'ân was revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), we used to learn what it included of lawfulness and prohibtion and what should be understood from it. These days, however, we witness people who learn the Glorious Qur'ân before having faith. These people recite the Qur'ân from its first Sura to its last one without being aware of its commands, prohibitions or what they should understand from it.*»[2]

In spite of this, we see similar prominent figures in our time who are regarded by the people as the bearers of the Qur'ân. These prominent

(1) Related by Muslim.
(2) As-Siûtî, "Al-Itqân" (Mastering), 1/258.

figures, sitting at the front of assemblies of knowledge, are delighted that people regard them as men of knowledge. Accordingly, they pretend to be knowledgeable and circulate refutable falsehoods among the people, either with a good or ill intention.

The most dangerous among such groups are those disseminating false interpretations and who are absolutely forbidden from doing so by the seventh verse of Sura of Âl-`Imrân (The Household of `Imrân). In this Verse, Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***As for those in whose hearts is a deviation [from the truth], they will follow that of it (unspecific verses, eg. Contains parables etc.) which is unspecific, seeking discord and seeking an interpretation [suitable for them]. And no one knows its [true] interpretation except Allah. But those firm in knowledge say, "We believe in it. All [of it] is from our Lord.***﴾ [Âl-`Imrân (The Household of `Imrân):7]

These people, however, have not stopped their wrong interpretations. They have sought the hidden meanings of the unspecific verses of the Qur'ân, paying no attention to the description of the hearts of those who do so in the aforementioned verse as having a "deviation". Thus, they have seriously harmed Islamic discourse with regard to its texts, interpretation and understanding, more than any other harmful techniques. Since the aim of false interpretations is to stir dissension, the Muslims have divided into sects and groups. Consequently, clandestine movements have emerged under the cover of mysticism or philosophy.

The door of false interpretations has been the main method of causing serious deviations from the path of Islam. If the people who conduct such misinterpretations are truly acquainted with the Glorious Qur'ân, and are true believers, they would not have done so. The fact is that they are ignorant of its implications or deny them, both in their hearts and minds, in most cases. Namely, they use misinterpretations as a cover to maliciously penetrate Islamic discourse.

In this connection, I would not be exaggerating when I say that the history of Islamic discourse has witnessed the following stages:

1. The stage of the Glorious Qur'ân which was sent down to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and his explanations of the Qur'ân through Divine revelation.

2. The stage of the misinterpreted Qur'ân that overburdened Islamic discourse.

3. The stage of the altered Qur'ân which we would have almost witnessed had the Qur'ân not been 'divine'. We are in an urgent need for the Divine Revelation more than ever before. This is because the bigoted ones who misinterpret are numerous whereas the advocates of the Divine Revelation, adhering to and defending it by all means, are few. Yet, Allah has full power and control over His Affairs.

Referring to the second *Hadîth*, the mission of "the scholar", which is mentioned in the first *Hadîth*, is to resist the three groups: the extremists, the falsifiers and the ignorant interpreters. This is in order to avoid extremism, falsehood and misinterpretation from affecting the Islamic discourse, including the Divine Texts, explanations of the *Sunnah*, and the understanding of them both. This is so that it will become new again.

Although Islamic discourse is an unchangeable structure with regard to the Divine Text and *Sunnah*, it is human regarding its understanding, which is influenced by the circumstances of humans and their criteria of comprehension. In addition, there is no urgent need to renew the Islamic methodology, as we proved in the two aforementioned *Hadîths*, except with regard to the human aspect of understanding which resulted in extremism, falsehood and misinterpretation, whether intentionally or not.

Accordingly, the thought of renewal is one of the principles of Islamic methodology to protect Islamic discourse from any manipulation and to keep it new till the Day of Judgment. That is because Islamic discourse (here, we mean the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah*) is Divine and renewing it is not subject to the criterion of time. This discourse is new in every age.

Thus, any attempt to establish and disseminate a new Islam will completely fail, no matter what disguise is used, such as the call for renewing Islamic discourse. This is due to the fact that Islamic discourse has its tools of renewal incorporated in it permanently and continuously.

Here, it should be taken into consideration that Islam is a religion and that when a religion is divinely revealed to humans through essengers, itconsists of a cognitive system that is constructed throughout several stages.

Hence, the renewal process of such a religion should consider and be in harmony with the very nature of these stages and their contents. As for Islamic discourse, the issue has to be tackled on the basis of considering these transitional stages.

Stages of the Formation of Islamic Discourse:

Islamic discourse has experienced the following stages of formation:

1. Stage of Divine Text Revelation. The Divine Text represents the Words of Allah, Glory be to Him, which He has, textually and meaningfully, revealed to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). In this regard, Allah, the Almighty, says: ﴿***Alif, Lâm, Mîm, there is no deity (to be worshipped) but Allah, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of existence. He has sent down upon you, (Muhammad), the Book (Qur'ân) in truth, confirming what was before it. And He revealed the Tawrâh (Torah) and the Injîl (Gospel) before as guidance for the people. And He revealed the Criterion, (the Qur'ân)...***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 1-4]

2. Stage of Entrusting Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) with Conveying the Divinely-Revealed Text to All humans. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***O Messenger, announce that which was revealed to you from your Lord and if you do not, then you have not conveyed His Message, and Allah will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table):67]

3. Stage of Entrusting Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Explain the Revealed, Conveyed Text to the People. This explanation of the Divine Text is recommended by Allah, the Most High; however, it cannot be described as His own words. Rather, it is the words of the Prophet, his *Hadîths* and *Sunnah*, in which he (PBUH) provided the people with a clear understanding. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿ ***And We revealed to you the Message (the Qur'ân) that you may make clear to the people what was sent down to them and that they might give thought.***﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees): 44]

4. Stage of Understanding the Divinely-Revealed Text. This understanding necessarily differs according to the criteria of time and place that have produced various cultures and numerous generations with various cultures composed of intellectual, philosophical and physical elements that may sometimes have something in common.

In this final stage, the effect of Islamic methodology in renewing its discourse is evident, either by re-reading previous understandings that represent "the heritage" of the nation or by reading the phenomena and events that occur in the nation as well as scrutinizing them in order to use the appropriate Islamic description to classify them. This, in return, determines the Islamic attitude towards such events for the whole nation, being either acceptance or refusal of them.

Heritage Discourse vs. Incident Discourse

1. Heritage Discourse

Reviewing the discourse of heritage cannot aim at reformulating it, no matter how noble the motivations of such a reformulation presumably seem. This is because this will corrupt its characteristics of being a "heritage". That is, this heritage was the product of its people, during their time, and it met their requirements and needs in line with the circumstances and variables at that time, which urged them to understand and interpret the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah* in the way they conveyed it. Also, the effect and implementation of such a discourse would last as long as the circumstances and variables that produced it still remained unchanged. Moreover, the same needs, despite the passage of time, did not call for a better treatment or, at least, there appeared no better treatment for them. The idea here is that it will not be considered "renewal" to re-formulate such a discourse and replace it with solutions that may yield nothing.

Even with different circumstances and variables as well as the need for resolving a certain problem, keeping its solution to our cultural heritage, as formulated by its own people, means being much more honest and loyal towards this heritage. This is based on the fact that heritage is a reliable record that documents the civilizing process as well as the cultural and historical accounts of the nation. These accounts represent an invaluable wealth for all nations and societies, whether it is in accordance with the successive scientific development or not, because this issue involves other considerations in the study of comparative history.

We should not be distracted from this methodology of reviewing heritage by the attempts of some people who are urged by different ideologies whose discourse is completely and fundamentally incompatible with the Islamic discourse. They aim but to steal the heritage from its own people. They even announce - as mentioned by Tawfîq Salûm, one of their advocates and theorizers, in his book "Towards a Marxist Vision" (issued in Arabic) - that the advocates of historical materialism obviously aspire to be, according to the expression of Lenin, "the keepers of heritage and the more worthy ones to preserve it. At the same time, Samîr Amîn, another member of the same school, propagates the principle of adopting the socalled progressive aspects of the heritage, such as the works of Ibn Rushd and Ibn Khaldûn, and rejecting the so-called reactionary ones, such as the works of Al-Ghazâlî. (1)

(1) For more information about this topic, see the book entitled "*Al-Marxlamiyyah wa Al-Qur'ân*" (Marxislamism and the Qur'ân), Beirut: Al-Maktab Al-Islâmî.

The attitude towards preventing the re-formulation of heritage should not be understood, in any way, as hindering the attempts to rectify it. The rectification process is essential since it represents a form of loyalty to the heritage concerning the bases of its formation from one side and the history of the heritage, which comprises the necessity of verifying the authenticity of events ascribed to it, from another. As a result, a point of view can be added to this hereditary system as a form of shedding light on the positive and negative aspects related to previ- ous solutions as well as correcting the hereditary events after studying their authenticity so as to affirm or deny them. All of this can be done without re-formulating heritage so that it remains as it has been conveyed to us, along with our evaluation. Thereupon, four elements can be achieved:

First: Loyalty to the heritage by not distorting it, whether we are satisfied with what it contains or not.

Second: Honesty of transmission, whether the transmitted matter is authentic,regarding its occurrence, or not.

Third: Undertaking the responsibility of verifying the authenticity of the date of occurrence so that an event can be affiffirmed as it has been conveyed or be re-dated after verification. This, also, involves verifying the authenticity of events without any removal of details.

Forth: It is the most important of all; namely, identification of those matters that still constitute the best and most appropriate solutions at hand, and those for which alternatives should be sought due to the change in the means of understanding the discourse which leads to it being understood in a more appropriate way. Looking for alternatives should also be sought when there is a change in the constituents of the solution derived from the heritage. If such a change had occurred before the formulation of the solution derived from the heritage, it would have been formed in another way, and would have been transmitted to us as a different heritage.

I shall introduce some brief examples of the above-mentioned stages so that the topic does not remain purely theoretical. An example of "the loyalty to heritage" by avoiding any distortion can be found in what has been conveyed to us in the *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence) of the *Salaf* (the early Muslim scholars) concerning the *Shar'î* (legal) rulings pertaining to the one captured during a war between the Muslims and infidels. Some people may wrongly think that Islam laid down the foundations, grounds and justifications of slavery. The fact is that Islam appeared while slavery was the norm in previous nations.

Muslims engaged in wars with their enemies. In battles, the two parties would take captives and spoils of war from each other. The Muslims had no choice but to accept the system of reciprocity and like treatment. They would use such a system as a trump card in their hands by which they could negotiate or frighten their enemies, if the later resorted to using the same card.

Islam, however, does not consider the person who is captured as anything but a human being who has the right to claim and seek his freedom, like the rest of all human beings, away from any servitude but that to Allah, the Almighty. Thus, Islam set up the system of emancipation so that anyone who is taken captive can easily attain his freedom. That is, when the master of this person commits a sin, from which people can hardly abstain, Islam makes the penance of such a sin to be the emancipation of a slave. Here, I call on the contemporary scholars of *Fiqh* to use only the terms that indicate the meaning of emancipation as well as the issue of slavery in a way that do not imply that Islam came with the system of "slavery".

As for "the honesty of conveyance" and "the responsibility of verifying events", I shall mention the story of "*At-Tahkîm*" (i.e., the Arbitration) between `Alî Ibn Abû Tâlib and Mu`âwiyah Ibn Abû Sufyân as an example.

This story is still conveyed to us in a way showing Abû Mûsâ Al-Ash`arî – `Alî's representative – as a naïve, simple-minded person whom `Amr Ibnul- `Îs – Mu`âwiyah's representative – managed to deceive concerning their agreement on discharging both `Alî and Mu`âwiyah from the caliphate and giving Muslims the right to choose their caliph. According to this way of conveyance, after Abû Mûsâ Al-Ash`arî announced the discharge of `Alî, `Amr Ibnul-`Îs declared the appointment of Mu`âwiyah and so the matter ended this way. The story goes: The Muslims who attended the assembly to hear the result of arbitration witnessed it and were satisfied with the way of announcing the new caliph as well as the judgment announced by just one of the two arbitrators.

Here, let us suppose that Abû Mûsâ was a naïve and simple-minded person, and of course he was not, were the Muslims who witnessed the declaration the same? Again, if `Amr Ibnul-`Îs was very cunning in a very serious issue that may affect the present and the future of the Muslims, and he was certainly not, would the Muslims who witnessed the declaration accept this? Then, would Imâm `Alî accept such deceit while he was a witty, intelligent and knowledgeable person?

Were the *Kharijites* more aware and careful about Islam and Muslims' present and future than `Alî, the Companions and the Muslims who

witnessed the event such that they (the *Kharijites*) were the only group to reject the arbitration and its decision?

Do you not notice that the story of arbitration, as conveyed to us in narrations attributed to the *Salaf* and has become part of our heritage, arouses hundreds of questions that call for convincing answers? Through this paper, I call for reviewing the narrations transmitted about this issue, not to erase them from the transmitted heritage, but to clarify the truth of the event and include it in the transmitted narrations, so as to complete the content of the heritage by presenting what is true and rectifying what is not true.

2. Incident Discourse:

This type of discourse may be the most important one in this research. Its content is full of ideas and premises whether those related to "the discourse of the present" or those related to "the discourse of the future" which all the concerned cultural schools attempt to establish.

Therefore, we should clearly and carefully tackle this kind of discourse in order to prevent any neglect of 'Islamic discourse' and prevent 'the other' being encouraged to substitute dispute for dialogue, mutual hatred for assistance and wrangle for cooperation. Otherwise, no results based on mutual satisfaction or objectives which are built on trust shall be achieved.

We should handle this issue from its two facets: the one relating to the discourse as seen by its advocates, and the one concerning the discourse as seen by 'the other'. This is in addition to determining the position of 'the other' in the Islamic discourse.

a- The Discourse of the Present

It is the one which researchers and thinkers have agreed to call "the contemporary discourse". For my part, I prefer to call it "the discourse of the present." That is because the attribute "contemporary" is closely associated with the discourse regardless of the need for any renovation, while attributing it to "the present" is appropriate for 'the discourse' before thinking about renovating it, and the recent cases whose solutions have not been found yet at the time of formulating the discourse. It is also related to whether the discourse is ready and able to answer the new issues and give the accurate and sound religious description for them, or if it is unable to undertake this task.

Indeed, situations are the factors that stimulate the need for a solution with no relation to time, being past or future. However, one hundred years, for example, is nearly enough time for circumstances to change and for new needs to emerge. This matter is obviously noted in the aforementioned

Prophetic *Hadîth* stating: *"At the end of every one hundred years, Allah raises up in this nation one who will renovate the religion for it."*

Nevertheless, Islamic discourse, as pointed out before, is an integral part of the Islamic intellectual system which is composed of the Divine Text (i.e., the Qur'ân) of the discourse as well as the understanding of this discourse (i.e., the *Sunnah*). It is worth noting that understanding the Text should not be dissociated from the Text of the discourse itself since the former represents an extension to the later as regards its tasks and purposes, such as organizing relations among people, between people and authority, or among all of them and their Creator in accordance with the legality derived from the Text.

As mentioned before, it is indisputable that there is a difference between the sanctity of the Divine discourse that protects it from transformation and change, and the human lack of such a feature.

It is also admitted that the Divine Text represented in the Glorious Qur'ân as well as its interpretation (i.e., the *Sunnah*) has been precisely formulated in a way that allows one to produce new indications according to the human mind's level of development, which is continuous advance.

This is due to the advancement of the methods of searching for universal facts and discovering the laws of the universe which were placed by the Almighty. This advancement cannot reach its climax at one time so that the factors of understanding can be renewed in a single form. Rather, the process of searching for the truth will last until the Day of Judgment, when the absolute final truth will be revealed. This will happen when the purposes of this worldly life are fulfilled and human beings are brought to the primary stages of the Hereafter. This is inferred by the eternity of the Divine Text, including the recommendation to contemplate the signs and manifestations of Allah, Glory be to Him, and how the creation began. In this regard, Allah, the Most High, says:

﴿Say, O (Muhammad), "Travel through the land and observe how He began creation.﴾ [Al-`Ankabût (The Spider): 20]

This verse is a text of the discourse (the Qur'ân) that is addressed to the people until the Day of Resurrection. This indicates that the discovery and recognition of the laws of the earth will not come to end before the end of time.

Each epoch of the course of universe will include an understanding that derives its elements from the events of such epoch as well as the development of the discovered facts. Moreover, this understanding will enable one to uncover much from the connotations resulting from the unchangeable Text.

If this is the case, then understanding 'the present situation', which has not yet existed, using the elements of a previous understanding of the text necessitates reconsideration and analyses of its connotations, which will always be able to give a solution. This solution can be obtained through either applying a previous understanding of a former similar situation to the current "situation", or establishing a new understanding that gives the "new situation" its ruling of acceptance or refusal. This way, we can understand the phrase "the contemporary Islamic discourse" within its framework.

b) The Mechanism of Formulating the Discourse:

It is very important to show the difference of the mechanism of formulating the discourse in the Islamic cognitive system and the other cognitive systems of non-Muslim nations and societies.

In such nations and societies, if a "new event" exists and becomes common among the people, then the society expresses its point of view that appears in its discourse via the laws regulating their life.

As for a Muslim society, a "new event" becomes a subject for discussion in the light of the constant matters of the Text and within its circle of possible implications. Otherwise, this event cannot be attributed to the Islamic methodology or described as being Islamic. [1] If it turns out that the event is acceptable according to a possible indication in the Text, the discourse is to be formulated in a way that adds an Islamic description to the event. Otherwise, the event is denied such a description and the discourse is to be formulated in a way that clarifies this denial.

The reason behind this is that the Islamic cognitive system has a firm referential authority composed of several elements that are not available in any other cognitive system of non-Muslim nations. The most prominent among such elements are:

- This authority is not subject to time and place nor limited to a single nation or society. That is, it is addressed to all people, no matter when or where they are. Moreover, the people's policies attempt to achieve what is good for their affairs and keep them away from corruption as long as they comply with this authority. Furthermore, if each generation reflects over its constants properly, understand its objectives rightly, and read it thoroughly and in detail, it will certainly reach a sound solution and the desired *Shar'î* (legal) ruling.

(1) Ibid.

- The exploration of the indications of its contents, regardless of place and time, does not imply a contradiction with the constancy of its Divine Text, which is protected against any change and alteration. Moreover, such exploration does not signify there is any misguidance in any of the open and limitless connotations. Otherwise, such connotations would be more liable to change and distortion than being constant and unchangeable. Instead, it means that Allah, the Almighty, has granted this authority many implications that satisfy the needs of successive generations. Thus, any attempts to search for solutions in other authorities are but a major form of deviation from light to darkness. That is because the Divine role, as compared to other alternative roles, is one of the constant facts of this authority. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Allah is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out from darkness into light. And those who disbelieve - their allies are Tâghût***[1]***. They take them out of light into darkness***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 257]

- This authority clarifies the role of Islamic methodology in dealing with events. That is, this methodology affects and is affected by the event.

These elements represent some of the guidelines of the Islamic methodology that consider any event as a subject of discussion, not something that regulates viewpoints. Islam considers an event as legal or illegal only after reviewing it.

Since this mechanism in formulating the discourse cannot be regulated and demonstrated by just mentioning its advantages, it is an essential guideline for the reliability of the formulation of the discourse – after being reviewed and evaluated, whether by keeping the discourse as it is or by renewing it – that such processes should be done by qualified and competent persons. Such people are needed for the following reasons:

- Such people are considerably well-versed in the discourse, with respect to its Divine Texts and interpretation (i.e., the Prophetic *Sunnah*), as well as its language.

- They have a profound knowledge of Arabic as the language of the discourse (i.e., the Qur'ân), as Arabic, due to its richness, is able to convey the appropriate indications and meanings of the discourse. In this regard, Allah, the Most High, says: ﴿***Alif, Lâm, Mîm. (This) is a Book whose verses are perfected and then presented in detail from (one Who is) Wise and Acquainted.***﴾ [Hûd (Prophet Hûd):1]

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(1) Tâghût: False objects of worship.

- They have sincere faith in Allah, Glory be to Him, in private and in public, as well as sincere devotion and fear of Him. Moreover, they are ascetic persons who seek the reward of the Hereafter. There are only few persons like this in the later generations as Allah, Exalted be He, describes them saying:

﴿***A (large) company of the former peoples. And a few of the later peoples.***﴾ [Al-Wâqi'ah (The Event): 13 and 14]

Observing this criterion (of using competent scholars) aims to protect the Islamic discourse from those who pretend to be knowledgeable while, in fact, they are ignorant of it. Also, this prevents the infiltration of those who whimsically aim at altering the goals of the discourse by proposing an unsubstantiated understanding. Unfortunately, there are many examples of such people in our present time. We see pretenders but not real advocates. As a result, the Islamic discourse's arena has become full of people who insistently try to interpret the ambiguous texts of the discourse, while they do not understand the prohibitions and warnings concerning such an action. They are as if they had never heard Allah's saying:

﴿***As for those in whose hearts is deviation [from truth], they will follow that of it which is unspecific, seeking discord and seeking an interpretation [which suits their desires]. And no one knows its [true] interpretation except Allah. But those who are firm in knowledge say, "We believe in it. All [of it] is from our Lord.***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân):7]

However, most of them may know about this verse but brush it aside so that, under the cover of calling for renewal, they may achieve their aim of inventing a new religion and falsely attributing it to Islam. It is regretful to see the arena of Islamic discourse lacking those who should undertake the responsibility of explaining matters as they suit the description stated in the Prophet's *Hadîth* narrated by Abû Ad-Dardâ' as: «*Surely, the scholars are the heirs of the prophets*».(1)

c- Muslim Scholars and the Responsibility of Formulating the Discourse:

I pave the way for discussing this subject by referring to the following Verses and *Hadîths*: Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿***Only those who fear Allah, from among His servants, are those who have knowledge.***﴾ [Fâtir (The Originator): 28]

(1) "The Known Secrets concerning Fabricated Hadîths" (in Arabic), Al-Mulâ 'Alî Al- Qâri', verified by Muhammad Al-Sabbâgh. (Beirut: Islamic Office) p. 147 .

Allah also says:

﴿***And (mention O, Muhammad), when Allah took a covenant from those who were given the Scripture, saying: "You must make it clear to people and not conceal it." But they threw it away behind their backs and exchanged for it a small price. And wretched is that which they purchased.***﴾ [Âl-`Imrân (The Household of `Imrân): 187]

Moreover, Allah says: ﴿***And do not mix the truth with falsehood or conceal the truth while you know it (the truth).***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 42]

The Prophet (PBUH) said: «*The scholars are the heirs of the prophets, and the prophets left neither dinar nor dirham, but they only left knowledge. Thus he who takes it takes an abundant portion.* »(1)

Also, Abû Hurayrah narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said: "*Whoever is asked about knowledge he has but hides it, then a bridle made of fire will be tied around his mouth on the Day of Resurrection.*"(2)

The above-mentioned examples are some of the Divine Text in the Islamic discourse and some of its interpretations as came in the Prophetic *Sunnah.* The Muslim scholars, be they *Faqîhs* (Islamic jurists), exegetes or *Muhaddithûn* (i.e., scholars of *Hadîth*), know that they are responsible for protecting the Divine authority, i.e. the Text (i.e., the Qur'ân) and its interpretation (i.e., the *Sunnah*), against any attempt to maliciously penetrate it or divert it away from its underlying goals, objectives and sanctity. Furthermore, they are responsible for maintaining the soundness of the human understanding of the discourse's Divine Texts and interpretation (in the *Sunnah*) by comparing the understanding of the Text regarding its interaction with the system of life and the new events that occur. That is, the Islamic discourse is connected to life, interacts with it and controls its rules and disciplines. This role of the scholars is very clear in the Prophet's saying: «*This knowledge shall be carried by the most just in every generation, who will remove from it the misinterpretation of the ignorant, the deception of the falsifiers and the distortion of the extremists.* »

This previously mentioned *Hadîth* obligates the scholars to bear the burden of certain duties, so they have no choice but to undertake them:

The First Duty: To undertake the responsibility of conveying and clarifying discourse, for all times and under all circumstances, through all

(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd.

(2) Related by At-Tirmidhî. He judged it as a *Hasan* (Approved of) *Hadîth.*

legal means as the nobility of the means is associated with the nobility of the final aim.

The Second Duty: To monitor distortions, false ascriptions and misinterpretations. Such points are the major ways used to take the Islamic discourse away from its right course and present it in a manner that hinders it from being correctly understood.

The Third Duty: To contribute persistently and effectively to the process of review in order to find out whether the current formulation of the human understanding of the Divine Texts is successful or not. On one hand, this review will help maintain this formulation as long as it portrays science as something which matches the connotations of the Divine Texts without any deviation. On the other hand, it will help review such a formulation whenever there are events that noticeably illustrate incompatibility between human understanding and the Divine Text in a way that suggests there is a flaw that affected the ability of the formulation to serve its intended purpose or the ability of human understanding to ensure a sound perception. Such incompatibility is a very serious matter that may provoke a state of suspicion regarding the Islamic discourse, which may provide an opportunity for "the other" to use it detrimentally.

The Fourth Duty: To work on developing the most accurate formulation so as to fit in with recent events. This is after considering the new events as a basic element that should be taken into account when formulating the new discourse.

The Fifth Duty: To exert efforts to adhere to the attributes and manners of the Prophet (PBUH). This refers to the sound understanding of the Prophet's *Hadîth*: *"... The scholars are the heirs of the Prophets..."*

The Prophets' estate is neither money nor property, but it is represented by the continuation of the mission of conveying, interpreting and disseminating Islam. This suggests a rejection of the wrong understanding that states that Muslim scholars have neither inherited money nor property from the Prophet (PBUH), but they have only inherited people's veneration and glorification of him. This is because the Prophet (PBUH) was a good model of modesty when treating the people. He used to forbid people from treating him as others used to treat their kings. Hence, if the Muslim scholars do the same and follow the example of the Prophet (PBUH), people will trust them, submit to their discourse and follow their footsteps, since they find that their words match their deeds. Without adopting this Prophetic

behavior, a Muslim scholar cannot truthfully and honestly perform the duty of the estate he has inherited from the Prophet (PBUH).

In all circumstances, venerating scholars, as a kind of acknowledgement and appreciation, is a favorable thing. However, such veneration cannot be acquired by the scholars demanding it.

d) The Relation between the Discourse and Its Deliverer :

All that we have discussed above cannot serve the desired purpose except through "the deliverer of the discourse". In other words, the more skillful and competent a preacher is in conveying the content of the discourse to the target audience, the more possible it is for him to achieve the desired objectives. Conversely, a preacher's failure to achieve the desired aims results in a type of split between the content of the discourse and the recipient.

This is the worst defect that has befallen Islamic discourse. It is a result of bad performance, not a deficiency in the discourse itself. The objectives of the Islamic discourse are multiple. Some of them aim at consolidating the creed of the Muslim. Another objective aims at inviting the non-Muslims to embrace Islam while some others relate to teaching and studying the pure Islamic sciences such as *Fiqh* (Islamic Jurisprudence), *Hadîth*, Exegesis and the like through which Islam can be integrally and entirely understood.

Each of these purposes requires a way of performance that differs from the other. For example, the method of preaching and guidance is not appropriate for the methodological teaching of Islamic sciences. That is because the study of such sciences needs one to be careful when reading, making comparisons and deducting rulings. In doing so, the student needs meditation and reflection more than the overflowing address that is needed toprovoke sentiments in order to capture hearts and feelings. The latter is the most suitable and preferable method for the preacher and caller.

The tools of the preacher include eloquent speech and knowledge of the Prophetic biography, poetry and proverbs along with Qur'anic Verses and *Hadîths.* The abundant knowledge of *Fiqh* and its principles, Islamic Exegesis with its approaches, and the Arabic language with its grammar and morphology are not of absolute necessity for the preacher as they are for the scholar who practices personal reasoning and discretion to deduce legal rulings substantiated by their proofs. That is, the discourse of the preacher differs from that of the scholar, who is specialized in deducing legal rulings.

An example of one of the worst matters that widen the gap between the preacher and the discourse on one side and the recipient of the discourse

on the other side is the example of a preacher in the Friday Sermon violently attacking the audience who are performing the Friday Prayer, as if they are disobedient and neglectful of their prayers. He, also, may unjustifiably criticize and despise a young man just because he performs prayer bareheaded, or the like.

Therefore, the deliverers of the discourse have to be entirely aware of the methods of conveying the discourse to people in a way that leads to acceptance and compliance.

If this is the case with the Islamic discourse directed to the Muslims, who are the people responsible for such a discourse, then one has to be extra careful when addressing other people (i.e., the non-Muslims). Addressing "the other" entails using a special language when delivering the discourse to him.

Islamic Discourse and "the Other":

We would not be exaggerating if we said that there was no civilization or culture throughout history that paid heed to "the other" in a way equal – even to the slightest level – to Islam.

This is due to the fact that Islam, principally, is a divine religion and a way of life for all human beings. Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was sent to the whole world: ﴿***Indeed, We have not sent you except as a bringer of good tidings and a Warner to all mankind. But most people do not know.***﴾ [Saba' (Sheba): 28]

The Islamic discourse represented in the Divine Text noticeably and meditatively abounds with distinguished calls showing the Islamic approach towards all categories of people, including the disbelievers. Its call is always targeted at human beings as it employs statements like: "O mankind", "O man", "O those who have been given the Scriptures", "O you who disbelieve", and "O you who believe".

It is not surprising that Islamic discourse addresses all human beings. On the contrary, it would be strange if the Divine Text addresses only Muhammad (PBUH) and his tribe, Quraysh, as the sealing prophethood is supposed to address all humans.

Islam is a message that extends throughout human life and encompasses it. This message supplies human life with guidelines and systems, and protects it from the dominance of opportunism that serves the interests of the strong, even if they are corrupt and detrimental for the nation and society, at the expense of the interests of the weak, even if they are needed to establish a society based upon justice and equality.

According to Islamic methodology, whether in the Divine Text, interpretation or understanding, "the other" is a target to whom the message of Islam is directed on the one hand, and he should be dialogued with and called for "an equitable word" on which all people agree on the other hand. Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***O Messenger, announce that which was revealed to you from your Lord and if you do not, then you have not conveyed His Message, and Allah will protect you from the people. Indeed, Allah does not guide the disbelieving people.***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 67]

Here, it is obvious that the command of conveying the message is directed to "the other" who has not heard about it yet. Allah, the Most High, says: ﴿***And do not argue with the People of the Scripture except in a way that is best.***﴾ [Al-'Ankabût (The Spider): 46]

Allah orders us to argue with "the other" in a way that is best because the desired aim is only obtained through conviction, which can never be acquired through mistreatment and enmity.

Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿***Say, "O People of the Scripture, come to a word that is equitable between us and you - that we will not worship except Allah and not associate anything with Him and not take one another as lords instead of Allah." But if they turn away, say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims (submitting to Allah).***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 64]

There are so many verses that call for "arguing and carrying out dialogue with the other" in order to convey to him the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah*, but they need several pages to be included here.

However, the issue of dealing with "the other" has, in our present time, many aspects other than those found during the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and during the following early centuries. This issue did not encounter the challenges it faces today. This is because Islam at that time was the greatest dominating power. Among the most prominent characteristics of Islam is to forgive and tolerate when it is in a position of strength.

Today, the Muslims suffer persecution and weakness, and face an obstinate opponent who does not want to engage in a dialogue that leads to mutual conviction derived from the most unequivocal proof. Rather, this opponent imposes a dialogue that leads to a pre-determined result.

This represents the ugliest kind of manipulation of the rules of philosophy and sound logic. Any conclusion should be reached through clear, rational argument, not through the methods of practicing pressure. Moreover, rational arguments are based upon axiomatic premises postulated by the parties engaged in the dialogue. This is the same approach on which the Aristotelian logic was built and is still applied theoretically in philosophy.

Now, the philosophy of power is prevailing. Accordingly, we have started to witness a type of logic that imposes premises to achieve a previously set conclusion. This is the most repulsive form of violation of reason and sound thought. To face this situation, the people who are in charge of Islamic discourse have to work on two basic issues:

The First Issue: To preserve the constants of Islamic methodology by addressing "the other," conveying the message to him, arguing with him in the most benevolent way, and accomplishing this mission under all circumstances and regardless of the other's attitude towards Islam.

The Second Issue: To be acquainted with the fruitful methods of dialogue.

That is because dialogue requires talent and qualifications that not every one who undertakes *Da'wah* (i.e., dissemination of Islamic teachings) may have, even if he has great knowledge. To illustrate, knowledge is an indispensable prerequisite for dialogue.

However, it is not suffifficient unless its bearer is professional in the art of dialogue. Dialogue, for the most part, is a special art that has its own rules and principles. All this requires us to tackle this issue in more detail.

(a) To get acquainted with "the other":

It is an essential element because one type of "the other" may be a true searcher for the truth. In this case, if he finds the truth, he will follow it as his faith and creed. Otherwise, he will continue searching for it. The best example of this type of people is Ibrahîm (Abraham; PBUH) with regard about whom Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿So when the night covered him (with darkness), he saw a star. He said, "This is my lord." But when it set, he said, "I like not those who set (disappear)." And when he saw the moon rising, he said, "This is my lord." But when it set, he said, "Unless my Lord guides me, I will surely be among the people gone astray." And when he saw the sun rising, he said,

"This is my lord. This is greater." But when it set, he said, "O my people, indeed I am free from what you associate with Allah. Indeed, I have turned my face toward He Who created the heavens and the earth, inclining to the truth, and I am not of those who associate others with Allah. ﴾ [Al-An`âm (The Cattle): 76-79]

Yet another type of "the other" may be among the arrogant disbelievers, even if you give him evident and unquestionable proofs that substantiate your argument and clarify his mistake. Finally, "the other" may belong to a third group that adheres to Islam only as a name while in fact they are among the astray.

(b) To know the cultural references and resources of "the other":

It is very important to know about the other's cultural guidelines and references of his civilization on which his arguments and proofs used to refute your arguments. Being acquainted with such references of "the other" facilitates the communication process and determines the best way for managing dialogue as each category of "the other" requires a certain method of dialogue that differs from the others.

(c) To know the methodology of dialoguing with "the other":

Since "the others" do not have identical cultures, knowledge or beliefs, this imposes situations that require each case to be handled differently. The most important one of these ways of dealing that needs to be highlighted is in the case of "the other" who does not believe in Divine authority from the very beginning and denies the revealed scriptures sent down to the Messengers, who were in charge of interpreting these scriptures to the people.

According to the concept of Islamic discourse, this category of "the other" is described in a way that suggests an incompatibility between the people entrusted to convey the discourse and those to whom the discourse is to be delivered. Yet, Islam has never despaired of trying to urge this category of "the other" to follow the truth after conveying the discourse to him, so that conveyance and interpretation may be fruitful.

It suffices to meditate and reflect on verses no. 255, 256 and 257 of Sura of Al-Baqarah (The Cow) to know about the Islamic methodology concerning the conveyance of the Message. In these verses, the dialogue is conducted between two different teams. To illustrate, consider the following:

Conveying the Name of Allah, the Most Great, and the Attributes of His Power:

In this regard Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿*Allah, there is no god but He, the Ever-Living, the Sustainer of (all) existence. Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep. To Him belongs whatever is in the heavens and the earth. Who is he that can intercede with Him except by His permission? He knows what is before them and what will be after them, and they encompass not a thing of His knowledge except for what He wills. His Kursî extends over the heavens and the earth, and their preservation tires Him not. and He is the Most High and the Most Great.*﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 255]

Announcing the Freedom of Choice as well as Its Consequences

Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿*There shall be no compulsion in (acceptance of) religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong. So whoever disbelieves in Tâghût (false objects of worship) and believes in Allah has grasped the most trustworthy handhold which has no break in it. And Allah is Hearing and Knowing. Allah is the ally of those who believe. He brings them out of darkness into the light. And those who disbelieve - their allies are Taghût. They take them out of the light into (many forms of) darkness. Those are the companions of the Fire; they will abide eternally therein.*﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256 - 257]

This is a form of the free dialogue that bears no coercion after the clear interpretation of the discourse is conveyed to "the other".

Let us consider the time the revelation was sent down to Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Then, the people who were addressed, except those of the Scriptures, were unfamiliar with any other intellectual system. 'How could we at that time carry out a dialogue with others having different deep-rooted cultures and philosophies?

It is certainly of no use to argue with such people with a verse of the Qur'ân or a *Hadîth* of the Prophet (PBUH) in order to convey and explain the message. This is because they entirely deny and disbelieve in these sources.

Here comes the importance of knowing other people, attempting to refute their beliefs from inside as well as from the rules of their methodology, and arguing with them using their postulations.

This matter is not easy without the complete ability to be acquainted with "the other". Otherwise, the result will be unsatisfactory, not because of the authenticity of their methodology and philosophy, but because of the inability of the one who carries out the Islamic discourse to understand the discourse of "the other" and scrutinize the flaws lying therein.

For example, I cannot carry out a dialogue with "the other" who is a Marxist unless I am fully acquainted with his philosophy, its principles and its line of reasoning according to both its advocates and their opponents.

Each material, man-made philosophy carries within it the traits of its deficiency and comprises the means of its collapse. A researcher has nothing to do but to examine this philosophy in order to discover these traits and means and exploit them.

The story of Ibrâhîm (Abraham; PBUH) with the one who debated with him is a good example. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Have you not considered the one who argued with Abraham about his Lord (merely) because Allah had given him kingship? When Abraham said, "My Lord is the one who gives life and causes death." He (i.e., the man) said, "I give life and cause death." Abraham said, "Indeed, Allah brings up the sun from the east, so bring it up from the west." So the disbeliever was overwhelmed (by astonishment), and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 258]

Ibrâhîm (PBUH) knew that the weakness of "the other" who debated with him was his dependence on only rational arguments backed by material, universal phenomena. Therefore, Abraham (PBUH) used the same line of reasoning, using a rational argument to put forward a universal challenge. Ibrâhîm said:

﴿***Indeed, Allah brings up the sun from the east…***﴾ (This is a tangible, universal phenomenon.)

﴿***…so bring it up from the west…***﴾ (Here is a request allowed by abstract, rational argument.)

﴿***So the disbeliever was overwhelmed (by astonishment).***﴾ (Finally, his argument collapsed.)

3. The Discourse of Globalization:

We have discussed "the Discourse of Heritage" and "the Discourse of New Events", and now we are going to tackle "the Discourse of Globalization".

Globalization is the most recent method that has affected the climate of dialogue among individuals and nations. It is a methodology which is worth mentioning.

Globalization is a prerequisite in Islamic discourse which is in reach of all human beings with no exception. Hence, people who are in charge of Islamic discourse have to work on spreading and disseminating it all over the world, conveying it to all peoples and convincing them to follow its commandments and avoid its prohibitions.

The means with which Islamic discourse addresses peoples and tribes throughout the globe are *Da'wah* (i.e., call to Islam) and dialogue, along with freedom of choice. However, the recent forms of the spread of views world-wide coming from "the other" are based on enforcement, compulsion and coercion. People in charge of Islamic discourse have no fear of the spread of views across the world which is imposed by "the other". Also, they do not consider the other's right as being less than their right to spread their discourse across the world. They are ready and prepared to carry out a dialogue between different civilizations of the other world on the basis of equal opportunities and freedom from pressures that lead to replace the concept of "dialogue between civilizations" with that of "dictation of civilizations". Are the advocates of the spread of views world-wide comingfrom "the other" ready for this too?

This is a significant question that constitutes a huge challenge for them. I think that they are unable to answer it except by using more means of pressure and coercion. Thus, we have to be steadfast, no matter how fierce the attacks are. Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴾Allah has promised those who believed among you and did righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession (to authority) upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them (therein) their religion which He has chosen for them, and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security, (as) they worship Me, not associating anything with Me. But whoever disbelieves after that, then those are the defiantly disobedient.﴿
[An-Nûr (The Light): 55]

Reconstructing Concepts and Substantiating Terms

Dr. `Abdur-Razzâq Qassûm(*)

There is convincing evidence that political discourse has failed to achieve the nation's ambitions. With its current approach, it does not enable the Islamic ideology to raise the standard of the nation's discourse to reach its full potential. Therefore, it is inevitable that the approach taken by Islamic discourse should be revised in order to achieve what political discourse, which is influenced by external pressure, failed to accomplish.

Introduction:

In this world of modernization and globalization, the current Islamic discourse is still searching for a well-defined position which can give it its lacking features and supply it with the required cultural characteristics.

The muddle of contemporary Islamic discourse, in a world that seeks accurate methodology and a clear intellectual vision, has amplified its confusion and deprived it of a comprehensive and invariable definition. As a result, it has become lost in this maze, with its best definition being: "There is no definition."

(*) Professor of Philosophy (Algeria).

How did our Islamic discourse fall to the bottom of the scale to the extent that it has been indoctrinated with ideological inconsistency, regional sectarianism, valueless beliefs and a blind following (of others)?

It is difficult for the researcher to determine the reasons and the factors that led to the deterioration of Islamic discourse, and determine the way to overcome this and the road to deliver it from this critical condition.

Currently, there are three trends or schools of thought with regard to Islamic discourse: an openness which embraces the unknown; a dwelling on the past; and a naive call to a combined imitation.

Can openness which embraces the unknown be a scientific school of thought in light of the urgent necessity for planning, clarity and a basis for the concept?

Is it Islamic to go forward while continuing to be drawn into the past?

Does self-awareness dictate that we abandon our culture, imitate others and lose our identity by blending it in theirs?

When studying contemporary Islamic discourse, the present writer came across these and many other complex questions that increased his bewilderment and steered him towards realizing the necessity for the reform and reassessment of Islamic discourse, using accurate scientific analysis and objective investigation. This is what we will try to achieve in the following pages, despite the topic's complexities and contradictions. This is the major methodological difficulty the researcher faces when determining the aspects of the problem in order to decipher them and therefore solve the problem.

When we examine contemporary Islamic discourse, we must first determine and analyze the impediments and shortcomings that obstruct its creativity and effectiveness. This process requires an in-depth study of the components and features of Islamic discourse. Thus, it goes without saying that we will discuss the tools of construction and consolidation in Islamic discourse in order to be able to deal with them. We will then discuss the terminology of "the other" in order to make a correct comparison and enter into a civilized dialogue based on knowledge and understanding.

This way, we can engage in a dialogue based on equality, which requires conviction and an avoidance of prejudgments that intellectually imprison the researcher. Since we all concede that there is a wide gap between the two civilizations, the two cultures and the two different views of mankind and the universe, we must emphasize the fact that Islamic discourse, within the contemporary Islamic culture, represents the bridge of

communication; the link in what is known as the dialogue between cultures, civilizations and religions. To play this role, our Islamic discourse must have all the formative components, means of conviction and the specifications to be efficient.

We will discuss the issue in more detail below.

1. Hazy approach to religious texts in Islamic discourse:

Can contemporary Islamic discourse, with its beliefs and ideologies, be considered as being disconnected from its roots and fundamentals? This question may be regarded as a direct challenge to the Muslim mind and Islamic thought in general. However, the in-depth study of the contents of Islamic discourse, with its contradictions, contrasts and the contradicting and disconnected directions we noticed within the schools of this discourse, made us raise this question. We have to solve the existing problems so that we can reach a clearer vision.

Although the discourse which expresses our culture is theoretically Islamic with regard to its frame of reference, and humane attitude of its rulings and judgments, the practical implications are not clearly outlined by those dealing with the basic religious texts and drawing benefits from them in order to spread it inside and outside the Islamic culture.

Thus, it is not strange to find within Islamic discourse schools of thought that try to support their own rulings and judgments, which are different from those of other schools, using the same reference from the basic religious text.

The callers for modernization from among the thinkers of Islamic discourse are obsessed with a feeling that has led them to a mistaken concept; this feeling is the fabrication that there is a conflict between the mind and the creed, between science and religion, and between the spiritual authority and the political one.

They suffer from a serious crisis; a crisis of rationale. This has resulted from the complexities that arose due to the lack of intellectual identity caused by the onslaught of foreign occupation that encountered an intellectual void and proceeded to fill it until it completely took hold. This is the reason for the haziness that clouds the minds of modern-orientated Islamic discourse producers when dealing with the religious texts.

On the opposite side, there are those who call for tradition concerning the Arab Muslim culture. They suffer from an opposite crisis; a crisis of

isolation and confinement within the basic religious text. They conclude the rulings from the text based on their own understanding and forbid any understanding or interpretation of the text other than theirs. Their problem is that they do not relate to the reality of modern life. They declare war, in the name of tradition, on the modern view, even its good aspects that include noble human values. "It is not permissible" is the key to solving whatever 'modern' problem they face.

The problem of confinement to the religious text and imprisonment of the mind within its limits is the reason behind the haziness of the approach to which the traditionalists, unintentionally, adhere to protect the Islamic cultural identity from the imaginary invasion.

Thus, Islamic discourse is lost between the two extremes; it has lost its creativity, unity and tools and so it is no longer able to accomplish its duties.

In this world of globalization that advocates lifting restrictions, removing limits and freeing the faithful from their beliefs and covenants, can our Islamic discourse, confined by the restrictions of the contrived modern attitude as well as the artificial fundamentalism, face the overwhelming current of globalization and protect Muslims from the dangers this current threatens their civilization with?

Can Islamic discourse, with its multiple reservoirs that can initiate it and the different natures of the texts in which it is recorded, make itself known in this stage of global knowledge which is packed with various ideologies and is under threat of a clash of civilizations and a war with cultural identities?

In the current state of our Islamic ideology, our top priority has to be creating a nation that is intellectually self-sufficient. Such a nation can have what the Moroccan thinker, 'Abdus-Salâm Yâsîn, termed "the invasive force"[1]. This invasive force is the one that is derived from the elements of power spread within the sacred Islamic text... which rejects fanaticism and rebellion since they are the cause of the ignorance and haziness that has enveloped the minds of Muslims and led to a lack of clear understanding. Moderation and tolerance (towards the other) are the main components of the Islamic reference texts. However, these axioms cannot prevail unless they come forward from a solid base that believes firmly in its creed, is aware of its culture and calls for the refinement of its humane nature.

(1) 'Abdus-Salâm Yâsîn, Al-'Adl (Justice) (Al-Ufuq Publishing, 2001), p. 333.

The callers for the modernization of Islamic discourse have to restore their awareness, get rid of their sense of alienation, and transform what they have gained from western research and culture to become intellectually and psychologically strong; to use it instead of being used by it. Islamic culture does not reject any of its intellectuals, provided that they are not carriers of any unwelcome cultural diseases. Equally, the traditionalists, who represent the potential and deep-seated power in our Islamic culture, have to allow their thinking to grow and expand to allow them to understand religious texts more clearly. The traditionalists are the guardians of our individuality and history. The gravity of their role lies in the preservation of the authenticity of the religious texts and presenting them to mankind.

But, with stagnation and a lack of clear understanding, they will not do justice to their mission. Their efforts will be in vain, like the one Allah, the Almighty, described saying what means:

﴿...except as one who stretches forth his hand (at the edge of a deep well) for water to reach his mouth, but it reaches him not...﴾ [Ar-Ra'd (Thunder): 14]

The haziness in the interpretation of the religious texts among all the callers for Islamic discourse is a methodological defect that is eating away at the core of the discourse. If we do not overcome this haziness through knowledge, understanding and awareness, the weak contemporary Islamic discourse will become lost altogether. As a result, our existence as a culture and civilization will come to an end, and that would be the greatest catastrophe.

2. Enriching the sources, not drying them up:

What would you say of those who set out to spoil a source of fresh water or those who turn green land into a bleak desert? This is the likeness of groups from among us who "swim against the current" and want to extinguish Allah's light with their mouths. They declare war on the Arabic language in the name of modernization, attack religiousness in the name of fighting "fundamentalism" and violate the sacred religious texts in the name of advancement and revolution.

They are spreading in our fertile ground like algae, causing mischief in the land, disguised behind slogans such as "secularism", "modernization", "advancement" and "revolution". We recognize them by their features, the tone of their speech and by their deviant behavior. We describe them as "the eradicators" because their habit is to eradicate all that pertains to religiousness, values and Islam.

We have experienced them in, for example, Algeria's bloody crisis and found them allied with the enemies against the faithful, trying everywhere to suppress the Islamic revival.

They have a double approach. The immediate approach is to suppress all attempts that call for strengthening Islamic discourse and to prevent it from taking up a prominent position in the public life of the nation. As for the second approach, it is to hinder the spread of Islam at the behavioral level by hindering the spread of Islamic ethics, at the educational level by hindering the teaching of the Qur'ân to schoolchildren and at the social level by hindering the establishment of Islamic schools with their values.

They rush to apply the external "reforms" to smother religious practices by selecting only some of them. They exclude all the legal rulings related to Jihâd (fighting in Allah's cause), such as self-defense, transactions, such as the rulings of marriage and inheritance, and the relations with non - Muslims. All this is done by claiming that they want to prepare the Muslims to live "free" from the religious restrictions.

These are the actions, marked to dry or drain the sources, which embody the slogans of the callers for modernization who represent the fifth column in our cultural and political marches. The opposite methodology is enrichment. However, while the secularists dry the resources by exclusion and contraction, there is another kind of draining up in which some traditionalists have caused the religious texts to stagnate and have hindered any intellectual attempts to understand them. They have made our Sharî`ah and rulings into petrified concepts that cannot change nor be changed; this is the opposite type of drying up.

The problem of contemporary Islamic discourse is represented in the double threat it faces from corrupt minds and those who have lost the way.

These corrupt minds, with regard to the philosophy of the concept, are those who graduated from the school of foreign occupation. This school has provided us with those who try skillfully to make us doubt about the ability of our culture to adapt to the latest developments of the modern age. They claim that the core reason lies in the "mythical restrictions" religion imposes on the Muslims to confine them and prevent them from progressing. According to this naive viewpoint, Muslims will not progress unless they release themselves from these religious restrictions. Accordingly, their attempts started with trying to dry up the sources and ended with selecting only some of them and contracting them.

If we refer to those who have lost the way, with regard to the philosophy of the concept, we will find minds that were shaped by the reaction to the first trend. These minds are represented by some intellectuals from different specialties, including scientists, jurists, historians and men of letters. They all act in the name of defending Islam and protecting it from harmful innovation, deviation and the evils of the philosophy brought about by modernization and its supporters.

In spite of their good intentions, there can be no justification for the bad results of their methodology. They have made restrictions on what is allowable in Islam and made unlawful what is permissible. They followed their path to eventually involve violence of actions after violence of words when they refused to engage in a constructive dialogue with "the other", based on the Qur'anic principle: ﴿**To you be your religion and to me my religion.**﴾ [Al-Kâfirûn (The Disbelievers): 6]

Moreover, the Qur'anic principle:

﴿**...And indeed, (either) we or you are rightly guided or in plain error.**﴾ [Saba' (Sheba): 24]

Thus, we call for enrichment of the sources instead of drying them up. Islam, with its Qur'ân and Sunnah and the work of the righteous early Muslim scholars, embodies the best example of the rich source which spreads intellectual richness and growth through dialogue and calling to Allah in the best way; devoid of fanaticism, intellectual deprivation and the one track interpretation of the religious texts. It is the responsibility of those who are firmly grounded in Islamic knowledge to undertake the task of intellectual enrichment to lead to the desired spread of Islam.

3. Unifying the basis and the aims

Finding a solid base to use as a foundation for our contemporary Islamic discourse is still a dream that occupies the thoughts of all those who are concerned with Islamic thinking, regardless of their different convictions and ideologies.

The fragile basis in Islamic thinking has led to a change in the aims which in turn has led to psychological dilemma, mental confusion and ideological misguidance. This is what the Moroccan thinker, 'Abdus-Salâm Yâsîn, terms "the metaphysical mirage".

Thus, the weakness of the basis and the unattainable aims represent the methodological problem that faces those who work in the Islamic field, with their different tendencies and contradictory attitudes. One hopes for a unified frame of reference for the rulings and texts, on which there is a general consensus. From those who call for keeping the religious texts sacred, to the spiritualists who adhere to the texts, to those who want to liberate all the texts; they are all controlled by a desire to reach the true creed or a strong conviction from which they wish to form a Muslim community which bases its rulings on the Revelation and adapts easily to the modern age.

Some of us may ask stubbornly, "How can we apply ancient solutions suggested by an ancient book to new, modern problems caused by a new and developing world?" [1]

This intellectual shallowness and naivety brought to us by the philosophers of the "mythology of progress" in our Islamic culture explains the mental confusion. It also led to a rush of opinions which were rejected by the Islamic culture and human logic. This is convincing evidence of their ignorance of our actual ideology and how poor their knowledge of it is, since progress and backwardness have never been judged by how ancient one book is or the updating of the rulings of another. Those who make such a judgment utter ill words regarding jurisprudence and cause damage to the methodology of the philosophy of the concept.

The reason behind this intellectual confusion may possibly lie in thecomponents of the intellect of the callers for modernization who adopt such an approach. The defect in their approach is that they try to apply ready-made concepts and terms that were made especially for the Western culture with its "Jewish and Christian" features. Even though the application of these concepts and terms led to conflicts and clashes between the church and the society, they try to apply them to a culture where the separation between the "Religion and the State" is not permissible.

Thus, the concepts used to search for a clear basis for Islamic discourse have been shaken.

What then, is the alternative to save our Islamic discourse from this intellectual instability and methodological confusion? Can we adopt the other prevailing trend that is represented in the discourse which maintains values, tradition and the sanctity of the religious texts as a counterbalancing discourse?

(1) 'Abdus-Salâm Yâsîn, (The Book of Justice), p. 349.

In spite of the fact that this second trend is characterized by selfassurance and, in all aspects, takes this as the principle and correct basis for our ideology, it too, has some methodological defects.

Returning to the original Islamic culture and protecting it from all the threats against it should in no way mean making an enemy of "the others". Neither does it mean shutting out the rest of the world. Any call for isolation and confinement within certain concepts, or any attempt to stop us from seeing or hearing anything else is against the essence of our religion, namely, the religion of universality, humanity and comprehensiveness. This universality, with all its components which should typify Islamic discourse, is the best shield against globalization, which tries to strip us of our distinctive features and identity.

In the light of these characteristics that should typify the desired Islamic discourse, we can determine the goals of the universal Islamic discourse. We still, however, have difficulties that hinder the path of determining the goals of contemporary Islamic discourse. The main ones are:

a. The lack of a clear vision on behalf of those who work in the field of Islamic culture: What does Islamic discourse want to achieve? Is it a missionary discourse directed at non-Muslims to encourage them to embrace Islam? Is it a vindicatory discourse used to defend Islam, as if it were the accused in a court room? Or is it purely an invitation whose mission is to help the mind understand the deep meanings of Islam by explaining its hidden depths and removing all misconceptions?

b. The complex of "the other": One of the points that controls our contemporary Islamic discourse is how we view "the other" and how to deal with them. Do we have an inferiority complex or superiority complex? Should we deal with "the others" in accordance with the way they regard us; namely, an embodiment of backwardness lacking the ability to innovate and manage dialogues and conflicts? Should we treat "the other" as a man who has lost his humanity and his soul, and has gone astray in this jungle-like world, and therefore it is our duty to help him restore his humanity and spirituality?

c. The problem of the tools: What is our Islamic discourse's situation with regard to the scientific tools used by "the other" to develop and grow, and that we are forced to use? Can these tools be regarded as neutral or does their significance lie in those who use them and what was accomplished by them? Do these tools, in spite of their technical nature, have an ideological effect on their users so that we should be careful when using them? Our

contemporary Islamic discourse must answer many different questions before determining its goals, as was the case when determining its basis.

We are required today to search for a way to unify the bases and the goals of the Islamic intellect which is still suffering from anxiety and is floundering in its search for an effective role. This cannot be achieved unless it realizes its weaknesses so that it can find the motivation that would help in dealing with the problems of our Islamic discourse.

4. Obstacles to evaluation in Islamic discourse:

Like the runner on the racetrack who must be intelligent and look to see the distance between him and his competitors and the distance remaining to reach his goal, the human experience, with all its material and immaterial aspects, must pause to take stock of its situation in relation its competitors in humanity and the culture race. Human ideology in its different stages of development, especially the ideology that is aware of its backwardness, like Islamic ideology these days, is required to evaluate the discourse which reflects its degree of development.

The evaluation of contemporary Islamic discourse requires a group of essential tools that can help us evaluate it in the best way possible. A close examination, an awareness of its entity and an understanding of the current status of humanity with its developments are the necessary requirements for the success of the process of evaluation and reassessment. Unfortunately, the evaluation process is not devoid of obstacles that need to be overcome, otherwise, these obstacles will become a source of discouragement.

We can briefly shed light on some of the defects which represent methodological obstacles in the process of evaluating Islamic contemporary discourse:

a. The shock effect of foreign occupation

Although we do not approve of the approach taken by a large number of those who work in the field of Islamic discourse, in which they blame our current situation on "the other", namely the West, the occupier, Zionism… etc, we cannot ignore the serious effect foreign occupation had on our culture and identity.

Our Islamic culture still suffers from the massive shock caused by the foreign invasions, both militarily and culturally. Our identity has received many blows, and each time it tries to recover from them, it is knocked back to the extent that it has lost its effect.

The researcher who closely observes the current state of our Islamic discourse can see how broken, alienated and disabled it is.

The overwhelming of Islamic discourse, which makes it sway between the effect of the successive shocks of foreign occupation and the attraction of its rich heritage, is the clear evidence that the occupation has succeeded in achieving its goals; namely, preventing Islamic discourse from reaching the international standard of innovation and also widening the gap between it and the universality of cultural human discourse.

We are afflicted by our deteriorated status quo, even though we do not know the reasons behind this deterioration nor do we know the effects. We are still dealing with a ready-made culture, with its concepts and terms that were made for others. We have, unfortunately, embraced this culture and taken it as the basis to build our intellect and enhance our ideology with the excuse that it is the culture of "the others" whose development and growth have surpassed ours. We did not, however, realize that the cultural concepts and terms we imported from "the other" would have negative effects on those who applied it, as they were meant for an environment different from theirs and for people other than them.

In fact, the Muslim intellect has suffered its worst affliction: cultural isolation, even though these Muslims live among their own people. The reason is that the features of the Western culture; the language, the ideas and the characteristics of their religious or ideological conflicts, cannot be applied to our culture. In our society, there is no conflict between the spiritual authority and the political one. Therefore we do not need to import this conflict and apply it. Moreover, their culture is characterized by certain customs and features which do not fit in with ours and which we cannot become accustomed to.

If we add to this the culture of violence, the loss of lineage, the weakening of the marriage bond and the increase in adultery, we can see to what extent we are shut off from this world that we only experience on television.

This corrupt behavior is the result of wrong foundations. They are the deadly diseases we have inherited from the foreign invasions and occupations. Our societies enjoy the strength of youth and therefore are not influenced by the culture of the older generation that is typical of that of the occupying countries. However, it has succeeded in afflicting us with intellectual and cultural barrenness to the extent that we only see what they see and we see it through their eyes.

The question is why did foreign occupation fail in other countries like India, Japan and China and succeed only in our Arab Islamic countries. Is it only the Arab and Islamic countries that are susceptible to occupation? If so, what is the reason behind this susceptibility?

We have to answer these questions fully if we want to diagnose and treat this problem.

We, the Arabs and Muslims, have let go of the features of our cultural identity that are represented by our belief and understanding of our creed, our eloquence and pride in our true ancestry. This is the reason why our Islamic discourse is so fundamentally weak, ineffectual and without identity; here lies the problem and from here comes the solution.

b. The emptiness of modernity

If we accept that one of the difficulties of the scientific evaluation of Islamic discourse is our susceptibility to foreign occupation, we should also accept that another obstacle of the evaluation process is the cascade of cultural concepts falling down on us, like secularism, modernity and the like. All these concepts are related to what is called the philosophy of modernity. But what does modernity mean to a society, like our own Muslim society, which suffers from backwardness, disturbed education, poverty and malnutrition?

There is no doubt that modernity, as an attractive concept that entails living a luxurious life, means a lot to those who live in abject poverty, extreme oppression and shocking backwardness.

The importers of these concepts have overlooked the fact that although modernity is an apparently commendable feature, it is, in effect, a source of suffering.

What modernity are they talking about? Is modernity the description of a specific time in a certain society with its particular cultural characteristics and historical or geographical aspects? We do not do justice to modernity when we restrict its definition to a mere time notion which includes everybody in any society.

We know that modernity is a phase placed in contrast to the phase that has passed. We also know that modernity is a necessary development imposed by the cultural, social and economic reality, as well as the resulting scientific and technological products that alleviate man's suffering and help him lead a luxurious life. The scientific definition of modernity does not only

include the materialistic side of man's life, since man is a cohesive being that cannot be developed in one aspect without being developed in the others.

The real meaning of modernity is that man keeps up with his age and its requirements. Scientific, technological progress needs a guarantor to protect its creativity and maintain its conditions. This is the best application of religiousness, and the noblest of behavioral attitudes. Thus, if we cut off spiritual knowledge from modernity, it will lack moral human behavior and it will be deficient. This is what we mean by the emptiness of modernity In its essence, modernity is a relative concept and a comprehensive term related to time. It is not restricted to a given region, people or culture.

Each age has its own form of modernity. In this sense, modernity is the opposite of ancient. Ancient is not necessarily the worst of times. Likewise, modern is not necessarily the best of times. Ancient was once modern and modern periods will one day be ancient. Both concepts apply to all ages and cultures. Why then, are some cultures regarded as wholly ancient and others as modern?

Why do some of us present our heritage as ancient and disparaged while modernity is presented as an approach for development and growth?

Many researchers and thinkers are deceived by two facts which need to be analyzed and explained. Therefore, we have to begin by illustrating the demerits of this seemingly attractive modernity. We should also show that despite the positive materialistic aspects of modernity, like prosperity and welfare, it has eradicated the best aspects of mankind, most important of which is its humanity.

While the innovators of modernity disbelieve in this strange cultural invention, wanting to go beyond it to post-modernity and restrict the use of the word modernity only to the idea of the Western person in contrast to the backward person, we notice that some of us who are separated from our own culture strive desperately to adopt what was rejected by people in the West. The gravest point is that they want to replace what is better with what is worse. They disregard their heritage and culture and want to cancel them, so that we can adopt the modernity of the others, even if it takes us back to a jungle-like world where the strong overpower the weak, the rich abuse the poor and the despots control the oppressed.

The most serious thing about this empty modernity is that it denies an important historical fact and an essential intellectual function, namely, our contribution in creating our own concepts and in enhancing our intellect, which play a major role in creating civilizations.

What would you say about a group of our people who disbelieve in their Islamic discourse, which protects them from losing their way and going astray, and believe in what the rational thinkers of the makers of European modernity disbelieve in? Do they not realize that the deficiency of the European discourse of modernity is, according to the Algerian intellectual Muhammad Al-Bashîr Al-Ibrâhîmî, that which brought us torment and suffering, and confiscated our lands and properties?[(1)]

The sound-minded within our contemporary Islamic discourse realize that modernity, with its intellectual poverty, causes the Arab citizen to lose his/her human philosophy and strips him of his spiritual ideology and moral behavior. These are the values that modernity lacks when addressing people today. This is the reason why such modernity cannot be a model for our Islamic discourse, which promotes justice, addresses the spirit and strives for love. The evaluation of our Islamic discourse must start by removing the weaknesses which deprive it of a clear vision and prevent us from making it a well-defined discourse. This is the true substantiation of the concepts and terms.

c. Dependence Not Creativity:

If we trace the progress of contemporary Islamic discourse, we will find that our discourse suffers from a number of specific obstacles which often hinder it from playing the desired role. Among these obstacles is what has come to be known in our Islamic discourse today as the ideologically disabled person, like the intellectual whose "natural disposition has been buried", those "who are not taking the matter seriously" or those "who are immersed in the culture of others". These kinds of intellectuals who llegedly

work for Islamic discourse are "the Westernized intellectuals", according to `Abdus-Salâm Yâsîn. He describes them saying, "their minds are polluted and we should isolate our children and youth from them lest their pure minds be contaminated."[(2)](1)

These intellectuals are dependent on others, but describe themselves as innovators. They do not know that their approach represents the most dangerous kind of dependence, namely, intellectual and belief-related dependence.

(1) Âthâr Al-Imâm Muhammad Al-Bashîr Al-Ibrâhîmî, Al-Gharb Al-Islami publishing house, the third part, p. 483.
(2) `Abdus-Salâm Yâsîn, Al-`Adl (Justice) p. 570.

The Algerian thinker, Mâlik Ibn Nabî, is one of the most prominent intellectuals who fought this kind of dependence. This pioneer in the field of contemporary Islamic discourse is one of the first people to diagnose the disease of dependence and provide us with the successful treatment for it. He diagnosed it as "the cultural whim".

Mâlik Ibn Nabî said, "Our dependence on others not only involves the dependence of consumers but it also means dependency in production as well. Consumer dependency means we use their intellectual products while production imitation means that we produce things just like those of the West without recognizing our own needs and local circumstances."(1)

How can we get rid of this dependence, especially the intellectual form, which has brought us to the bottom of the cultural scale? The Algerian intellectual Mâlik Ibn Nabî tried to provide us with a solution to deal with this intellectual defect when he said, "the solution is complete independence from the Western culture. It is complete independence from Western culture in belief-related matters now and forever. This cannot be achieved without having a cultural will, sincere intention and cultural capabilities. These are indispensable conditions."(2)

The real reason for being dependent is being susceptible to dependence or what Mâlik Ibn Nabî called in French "La colonisabilité", i.e. the susceptibility to colonialism. Ibn Nabî thinks that this dependence embodied in intellectual backwardness does not mean that we, the Arabs and Muslims, are the only people who suffer from backwardness. The developed societies also suffer from backwardness. The Algerian thinker said, "The developed societies are backward in the humane aspects.

Thus, the mission of a Muslim today is to achieve two goals:

1. Elevation of the Muslim people socially to the standard of civilization.

2. Elevation of the Western people morally to the standard of humanity.

Creed or the conscience can create science but not vice versa. When a man loses his conscience or creed, he loses everything. So, do not be deceived by appearances"(3).

(1) Mâlik Ibn Nabî, Testimonies and Prognostication, The last interview with Mr. Mâlik Ibn Nabî by Ibrahîm 'Âs, 2000.
(2) Ibid., p. 19.
(3) Ibid., p. 24.

Through this analysis, we can come to the conclusion that we, Muslims, lead a life of material hardship, while the Western people lead a life of spiritual hardship; we, and they, have to change[1].

We are all backward. The supporters of modernity suffer from backwardness too. Their backwardness may be even the most dangerous of all and so our backwardness will increase if we follow them.

While the problems of Muslims lie in backwardness, which is the result of severe social and economic conditions and are, therefore, circumstantial and not basic problems, the problems of the developed societies are severely psychological, and they are, thus, basic and fundamental problems. [2]

After these illustrations, can modernity, with its Western idea, that some are calling for, be our only option for the renovation of our Islamic discourse? In this regard, Muhammad Jasûs said, "The Arab people have only one alternative: modernity and integration. Any other choice will be marginalization and death." [3]

This is an example of those who regard modernity as the only solution to the problem of contemporary discourse within our Muslim community. Muhammad Jasûs is not an exception. There are many others who have followed his example, like Hasan Sa`b, who declared that modernity is the way forward, and Nadîm Al-Bîtâr, whose fatal judgment states that, "To build his new destiny, the Arab citizen must first lose confidence in the ability of the traditional Arab existence to survive. He has to free himself from it and feel the need to go beyond it and revoke it." [4]

By these invitations to rebel against the Arab Islamic heritage, those who deny the innovative ability of the Islamic intellect, urge us to embrace modernity as the only approach to overcome the so-called cultural crises of Islamic discourse. In fact, the supporters of modernity are those who have put us in this serious cultural crisis, the crisis of modernity, in the first place.

(1) Ibid., p. 29.
(2) Ibid., p. 36.
(3) Muhammad Jasûs, (Religion in the Arab society), the Arab Unity study center, year 5, No: 5, Dec. 1988.
(4) Nadîm Al-Bitâr, (The Revolutionary Ideology) (Beirut: The University organization for studies and publishing, 1982) p. 835.

5. The problem of contemporary Islamic discourse:

We can, with little effort, determine the aspects of the methodological problem we face by analyzing the components of contemporary Islamic discourse. All these aspects depend on two common states of the Arab mentality:

1. The ideological passivity when dealing with Western issues of modernity, which not only strips the Muslim mind of its values and concepts but also prevents it from partaking in true modernity.

2. The excessive sensitivity to all that is new by considering that all that is non-Muslim may contaminate the mind, and therefore we should protect ourselves from it in order not to be afflflicted by this disease of modern ideology.

Contemporary Islamic discourse is lost between these two extremes. Its goals have not yet been defined and this is the problem of this discourse.

In the light of this conflict within the Muslim character, how can we diagnose the symptoms of the crisis raised by the problem of Islamic discourse?

This crisis has many symptoms, which, if not dealt with, may lead to Islamic discourse having no influence on human civilization. Among the most significant symptoms of the crisis are alienation, closure upon the self, the conflict between the universality of Islam and the globalization of modernity, the conflict between geography and history in the structure of our civilization and furthermore the need to search for tools of knowledge to use in studying these conflicts. We have to determine whether these tools will be from our own culture or imported.

We have to answer these questions so that we can show the aspects of the problem Islamic discourse faces today.

a. Alienation and closure upon the self:

There are two ailments that may afflict the human mind and strip it of its energy and its features.

The first ailment is that which makes one forget one's identity and go after a mirage. It is the phenomenon of alienation which makes one live in world outside that which surrounds him, with respect to culture and belief. Since he finds himself within a culture and period he is no longer in control of, he resorts to another culture or belief system.

Thus, he lives his life attached to mere images. The psychological or intellectual effects of this alienation are represented in psychological anxiety

and deviant behavior that may lead to a state of inconsistency between the individual and the social life he has to lead. Thus, he will end up an alien among his peers.

This is intellectual alienation, according to the view point of some thinkers in the field of contemporary Islamic discourse, who were separated from their culture and belief system, in spite of its progressiveness, and resorted to the culture and beliefs of the "other", seeking the so-called progress and spiritual tranquility that they no longer found in theirs.

At the other extreme, there is intellectual closure on the self, which is also a psychological ailment that may develop into cultural and belief-related ailments. This is what is called the ailment of solipsism. When afflicted with this ailment, the intellectual imprisons himself within the limits of a given culture or period and refuses to go beyond them. As a result, he rejects the other cultures and declares war on them.

Our Islamic discourse suffers from both extremes, both rejecting the other. While the alienated person suffers from estrangement from his own heritage and culture, and disbelieves in their ability to achieve growth and development, the person closed in on himself lives in intellectual isolation and confines himself to the past. He regards all Western product as *bid'ah* (innovations in religion) and accuses of disbelief whoever believes in modernity and tries to apply it to our present Islamic condition.

Thus, Islamic discourse is lost between the two extremes, namely, between the inferiority complex which scorns the Islamic identity and that of superiority and arrogance. Our Islamic discourse has to get rid of these complexes so that it can reach a basis of moderation by creating a strong link between the time-honored past and the promising future.

This will result in an innovative form of Islamic modernity which takes into consideration the historical reality and the cultural present.

This will represent a sound basis for intellectual innovation, away from the pressures of false modernity and the temptations of exaggerated fundamentalism.

In addition, our Islamic discourse lacks an integrated originality concerning its own tools of knowledge and authentic historical components, which would enable us to create our own Islamic modernity that could grow in our climate, and feed on the positive aspects of our heritage and any humane aspects of the modernity of the "other".

The Islamic mind will not be able to produce its own innovative modernity unless it releases itself from this destructive dependence and disabling closure upon the self.

To get rid of the defects from which our Islamic discourse suffers, including breakdown, alienation, rigidity and closure upon the self, we should open our eyes and minds to new ideas. This way, we can restore to Muslims their lost life of innovation and help them achieve the desired cultural breakthrough.

b. Universality of Islamic Discourse and Global Modernity:

Islamic discourse tends, in its basic methodology, to be a humane message that calls for widely-accepted noble values; values that all people, regardless of gender or race, feel at home with. Moreover, Islamic discourse raises the banner of universality and goes far beyond color, race or gender. This is in accordance with the Islamic rule that all people are equal and that the Arabs have no advantage over non-Arabs, or the white over the black except due to their level of piety. Islam has nothing to do with coercion or oppression. Globalization, on the other hand, with its presumed modernity makes economic power a tool for domination, and military armament a tool for capturing the wealth of nations, changing their regimes by force and submitting them to one-track minded political influence.

To achieve these goals, globalization does not hesitate to use any means to dominate the world. It removes all the obstacles that hinder its advance on the pretext of maintaining the nation's sovereignty, protecting its culture or maintaining its civilization and religious identity.

Therefore, globalization uses attractive concepts as pretexts for its ideological advance, even if these concepts are lacking in content. These concepts are labeled as reform, democracy and modernity. It uses these concepts to resist our original fundamental concepts, like devoutness, *Sharî'ah* and the call to implement the laws of Allah, the Almighty, which He revealed.

Accordingly, the conflict between a universally-oriented discourse, which calls for implementing the laws of the Islamic *Sharî'ah*, that lifts mankind from its bestial state to the human state in its best forms, and globalization, which addresses the materialistic side of a person and gives him/her the freedom to get rid of his/her spiritual values and deep-rooted cultural values in order to enter into the state of globalization. Thus, it can

dominate him/her politically and economically, and preach the cultural age of globalization.

It is an uneven equation in both its extremes. The person living under Islamic universality nowadays is rich in spiritual principles, which promote him to the level of the advocates of peace, brotherhood and love. However, he is poor in the materialistic aspects. At the other extreme, there is the person living under harsh globalization who is often trapped in materialistic arrogance, whose strength lies in huge armies and large media tools. Globalization does its best to spread the philosophy of unrestricted freedom and the dissolution of the values of civilization. Such matters lead to moral impoverishment.

The state of globalization, that declares war on those who oppose it and threatens to erase the identity of the oppressed, has produced a man who suffers from his materialistic tendencies, and who is psychologically confused by the principles of globalization. Globalization has also led to a violent reaction on the part of the "other" that is represented in the fierce resistance put up by the people of other civilizations to strengthen their presence, protect their borders and reaffirm their beliefs.

The universality of Islam tries to instill the element of faith, that globalization lacks, into the heart of Muslims. It provides them with the most significant qualities of the Islamic civilization to protect them from the dangers of regression which globalization causes. Accordingly, it encourages Muslims to open their minds to the world as well as to contemplate their human bodies. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***We will show them our signs in the horizons and within themselves until it becomes clear to them that it is the truth...***﴾ [Fussilat (The Expounded): 53]

The Islamic call instills its original concepts into the hearts and minds of Muslims. Thus, it teaches them the fact that mankind is the meeting point of two worlds: the world of the unseen and that of the seen, and that men are made of physical matter and spirit; body and mind. [1]

The universality of the Islamic civilization is, according to this noble humane approach, in its essence a moderate civilization. In this sense, it rejects all forms of excessiveness and extremism (whether internal or external). Since it is based on monotheism, it does not regard belief

(1) Hânî Ramadân: L' Islam et la derive de L' Occident, Ed. ENNOUR, PARIS 2001, p. 81-86.

and reason as opponents to one another, nor religion and science, nor the religious authority and the political one. (1)

There remains the problem of substantiating and putting these Islamic concepts into practice so that they become active in people's daily lives. This is the serious methodological defect which has a negative effect on the universality of Islam, and which makes the Western modernity and globalization attractive to others, even though there are major disparities between the two approaches and major differences in their laws.

c. Limits of Conflict between Geography and History

Some historians think that the point where history ends and geography begins represents the real reason behind the conflict between the nations who have no history, and thus do their best to create history, and the nations who have both history and geography and do their best to preserve them both as proof of their existence in the battle with the ruthless globalization over identities and borders.

From the historical standpoint, the Islamic world is distinguished by a long history. Geographically, it has a distinct economic and strategic presence. These two factors have helped it to have a strong civilization and economic influence in the world, which represents a tough equation that cannot be ignored. Consequently, the presence of Islam on the world's map has made Islamic discourse, in the moral sense, an ideological force that, according to the view of the other, needs sufficient plans to be handled and contained in every possible way. It has also made the Islamic economy a vital and influential player in the world economy. Accordingly, it (the Islamic economy) must be taken into account when planning any development projects, whether they are industrial, civil or military.

Almighty Allah has appointed Muslims the custodians of the oil, which is the backbone of the world economy today. This has given the geography of the Islamic world extra importance, on top of the historical value of Islamic discourse.

It is against the background of this strategic geographical and historical position of the Islamic nations that "Excessive Capitalistic" ambitions emerged, according to `Abdus-Salâm Yâsîn. It then grew claws

(1) Ibid., p. 116.

which are more powerful today than ever, and which have a stronger desire to devour the great Muslim wealth, i.e. the wealth of oil. (1)

Thus, the fierce conflict between geography and history has started and is manifested in the current battle between the ever defensive Islamic discourse and the reprehensible, destructive and offensive discourse of the modernity of globalization. It is a conflict which takes account of the military, economic and strategic aspects of the geography of a land to eradicate its cultural and political dimensions of history.

Consequently, we have found that the discourse of the modernity of globalization takes account of geography when considering the ideology of the world. It colors the Islamic geographical areas in red, denoting them: "the danger of Islam". Thus, it puts obstacles and vetoes in the way of historical Islamic discourse to block its outlets (so as to obstruct it). This is the wretchedness of the ideology of globalization.

The political and economic geographical aspects have led to a war against the cultural history. Thus, the way has been paved for the domination of the culture of occupation (against the Islamic nations), which includes, among other concepts, the concept of contempt for the weak, economically dominating their wealth and exercising political influence over their ruling regimes. This is carried out by the philosophers of modernity and globalization, like Francis Fukuyama, a colonial official.

An observer of the events of our planet can easily recognize this globalization theory which makes geography a justification to eradicate history. This is not restricted to the Muslim world alone - even though it has been given priority - but is extended to other fields in the rest of the world, like the field of politicized sport.

We have experienced some instances in which geographical considerations overcame historical factors. We remember when "white" Germany was chosen to host the World Soccer Cup at the expense of "black" South Africa. This was only to favor the white over the black, and European geographical importance over African history.

The supporters of Islamophobia hold a strategy that supports fighting all races except the white, who are given the highest geographical and historical status at the expense of others and support the battle of the single color against all others. But this is to be expected as they are the ones who have complexes and inflict crises.

(1) 'Abdus-Salâm Yâsîn, (Book of Justice) p. 341.

"The Western occupation analyzed the psychologies of the peoples before analyzing the minerals of these peoples' lands. It was found that their psychologies are of the kind that is susceptible to colonialism," stated Muhammad Al-Bashîr Al-Ibrâhîmî the Algerian thinker.[1]

So how far do all these crises, whose adverse effects our culture and civilization could not escape, influence our Islamic discourse?

Can we say that the reason why our Islamic discourse retreats while the globalization currents advance is that it suffers from a lack of highly competent and efficient intellectuals who can hold a convincing dialogue, refute the Western claims and prove the invalidity of the theory upon which these claims have been built, namely, the dangers of Islam?

Our Islamic discourse, in all its forms and approaches, is still suffering from the conflict of pulling down historical cultures according to geography considerations which is directed by the West. In the light of this conflict, the theory of the "Nazi German" and the "Invading American" prevails; an embodiment of the "red blood that is shed for sacrifice and ransom, and the bright yellow gold that is dedicated to spending and temptation."[2]

Therefore, the limits of the conflict that gives preference to geographical aspects at the expense of historical ones are determined by the philosophy of blood and gold, the analysis of psychologies and the minerals of the Earth, and the ideology of the infantry and the pens. But, even after all these attacks, Islamic discourse can protect itself from the calamities and repercussions of this conflict by being aware of the effectiveness of knowledge and the strengths of cultural creativity.

6. Right Treatment:

The right diagnosis in our Arab Muslim folklore is referred to in a proverb that has a clear denotation. It states that "whoever conceals his pain will be killed by it". This proverb is very wise and is supported by science and knowledge.

This proverb can be applied to both material and abstract matters. A sick man may die of his disease if he does not go to a skilled doctor to diagnose his condition and give him the right medicine to alleviate his pain and suffering. Like people, cultures and communities can also be afflicted with destructive epidemics that may disable them and cause them

(1) Âthâr Al-Imâm Al-Ibrâhîmî, by Muhammad Al-Bashîr Al-Ibrâhîmî, vol. 3, p. 449.
(2) Ibid., p. 451.

to lose their creativity and their nobility unless Almighty Allah sends them a wise man who is an expert on the diseases of nations and civilizations. He can treat their pain and suffering, and enable these cultures and communities to use a discourse that is qualified to conduct cultural dialogues and is immune to any loss of identity.

In the light of this deteriorated status, in more than one field, our Islamic discourse is invited today to submit its features and components to undergo a correct diagnostic process so that the right treatment can be formulated.

If we submit our Islamic discourse to an accurate scientific diagnosis, we will find that it has a group of symptoms that always accompany it and its contents. We can summarize these symptoms in the following:

- The submission of our discourse, in all its forms and approaches, to restrictions that have determined its destiny, led it astray and humiliated it. Thus, our Islamic discourse is lost between the cunning politician and the preacher.

- The crisis of existence and the afflffliction of borders

The worst crisis from which our Islamic discourse suffers today is that it abandoned its higher principles, represented by the acknowledgement of the wideness of the world and the preservation of mankind, and became trapped within the limits of divisions, regionalism and the drawing of borders between the Muslim countries. After having once been unified, comprehensive and humane, Islamic discourse has become a defensive, justificatory and sycophantic discourse that enters into vain discussions managed by those who are engaged in it and who work for the rulers. It has, thus, lost its credibility, and abandoned its principles and characteristic features.

- Lack of methodology becomes a methodology

The weakness which characterizes contemporary Islamic discourse and which causes it to suffer from poverty and inadequacy has stemmed from a shameful hybrid methodology, namely, the lack of methodology. Favoring private interests and the spread of different kinds of temptations have led the Muslim mind into a continuous state of worry and vacillation or hesitation that led it to adopt this "lack of methodology" that became a methodology in itself, representing the worst degree of deterioration and regression.

To overcome this dangerous crisis, we think that our Islamic discourse should take immediate protective measures. These measures can be summarized in the following steps:

a. The prevention of the Western psychological hesitation:

If we examine contemporary Islamic discourse, we will find that it is more influenced by the secular intellectual modernization than by the belief-based intellectual outlook. The reason is that our Islamic discourse weakened after being stripped of its core contents and pushed far away from its correct track. That is why it has been infected with the Western psychological hesitation through which a person breaks off all his or her ties with religion and rids himself or herself of all humane qualities.

Through diagnosis, we discovered that Islamic discourse has a defect that is represented by many symptoms, including methodological anxiety, psychological confusion and ideological hesitation. A long time ago, our scholars and wise men detected the dangers of this syndrome and warned us of the repercussions from which we suffer today because we did not understand the lessons we were supposed to learn.

The great Algerian scholar, Muhammad Al-Bashîr Al-Ibrâhîmî, gave us a picture of the symptoms of the hesitation of today's Muslim mind when he said, "...and when I think of my Muslim people, I find that they have inherited from religion its superficial aspects, not its core; they have inherited words without meaning. Then they killed its spirit, used interpretation to terrorize its strongholds, used misguidance to prevent pure guidance and broke up its unity by creating sects."(1)

Division, which is one of the drawbacks of our contemporary Islamic discourse, is that which breaks up everything. Through division, religion is opposed by violence; religiousness is made to stand against tolerance; feminist literature is made to stand against male literature; the youth against the old; the liberals against the conservatives; the fundamentalists against the secularists.

The questions that remain are: how can we protect ourselves from this hesitation that we have inherited from the Western culture which we could not handle? How can we free ourselves of our susceptibility to infection due to our fragile psychological and mental composition? There is no doubt that we have inherited from the West what the West itself has abandoned. This fact has been supported by the testimony of Western intellectuals. The wise among them have confessed that the European mentality is stagnant in spite of its scientific maturity. It lacks the mental intuition with which we can sense matters(2).

(1) Ibid., p. 482.
(2) (Testimony and Prognostication) by Mâlik Ibn Nabî, p. 17.

In addition to the division which characterizes psychological hesitation with which the Muslims have been afflfflicted and which is, subsequently, reflected in their discourse, our contemporary Islamic discourse experiences a state in which words are detached from the meaning which they are supposed to embody.

The crisis of this discourse is that it adopts the terminology and concepts of "the other" with the religious, cultural and political meanings which have been developed in consistency with the Western mind. It borrows these terminology and concepts to insert them in our culture, which has specific and distinctive Arab- Islamic characteristics. Thus, our minds suffer from a psychological break down in the form of hesitation, anxiety and worry. It is the shameful condition from which our contemporary Islamic discourse suffers, a matter that causes the worst cultural regression.

Consequently, we must take protective measures so that we can protect ourselves from this psychological hesitation which has spread all over the Western world and has infiltrated to us through different channels.

These protective measures must start by immunizing ourselves against the colonial currents which neutralize the cultural characteristics of the Muslim society.

The immunization required for Islamic discourse is to employ the original scholarly knowledge, to return to our values, and to believe in these values' capacity to be culturally creative so that we can easily achieve self-growth and deal with others with a sound understanding and general benevolence.

b. Freeing ourselves from the barracks' mentality:

"It is impossible for a slave to have free thoughts." This was said by the early Algerian reformers of Islamic ideology. Nevertheless, it is still valid and deeply rooted in human reality.

Since we have concluded from the present analysis that there is a kind of cultural hesitation in our Islamic community and that this hesitation reflects the current status of Islamic discourse in all its different ideological forms, there is an urgent need today to pay much attention to the Islamic mentality as it suffers from many problems, most important of which are suppression and deprivation.

We do not exaggerate if we say that the Islamic society is wedged between internal suppression, in all its different forms of hunger, fear and oppression, and external pressures represented by the cultural and media invasion, and the attempts to empty this society of its cultural contents and strip it of its cultural features.

Between the internal pressures and the external defiance, a Muslim finds that s/he has to struggle for his/her survival, fighting the internal repression which turned regimes into something like military barracks which issue orders and instructions without tolerating discussion or argument.

The barracks' mentality, which distinguishes most of Islamic society, has tainted Islamic discourse with dependency and suppression that stunt its effifficiency and innovation.

While the foreign military bases are engaged in observing the national course of events and spying on the very details of the state's economic and social policy, the regimes do their best to dominate the citizens via the "policy of fear" and repression. When the regimes impose the military way of thinking on the minds of their citizens, they do so to maintain their existence and survival, thus, they make cultural and religious concessions to external powers in return for the latter turning a blind eye to their dictatorial practices.

Consequently, we have found that most of these dictatorial regimes tend to adopt the kind of reforms which aim at changing the social structure of the homeland, starting with amending the social laws like those that are concerned with marriage, divorce or inheritance. They also target the educational system to strip it of all that opposes the new globalization order in the religious texts. They, thus, excluded the subject of Islamic Education from the educational curricula claiming that it encourages extremism, as well as omitting what refers to colonialism and Zionism from the history books.

The real goal behind these 'reforms' is to prevent the citizen from waking up to the reality of the situation and fighting all forms of occupation, oppression and injustice, both internally and externally. Because Islamic discourse is entrusted with the task of spreading cultural awareness and embodying the nation's identity, it is qualified to perform the task of leading the nation, determining its path to salvation and resisting the farce of these selective reforms which target the holy books and the existing constitutions to analyze them and strip them of all the rules and laws that block the path that leads to occupation of lands and domination of their people.

It is crucial for contemporary Islamic discourse to start by freeing the people's cultural lives from the barracks' mentality which restricts the nations' free will.

It is the intellectual crisis that we have to overcome so that we can remove all the obstacles hindering Islamic discourse in this decisive phase of progress and reassessment. After accomplishing this task, this discourse will be able to glow and advance.

c. Cultural self-refill:

The cultural self must undergo a process of emptying and refilling during the process of cognition. This operation is a methodological principle supported by the intellectual philosophers led by Descartes at the beginning of the European Renaissance. However, those philosophers were not the first to offer this methodological idea since they were preceded by the scholars of the Islamic Sufi discourse. The Sufi Muslim scholars are the ones who established the rule of emptying and refilling with regard to cognitive behavior.

The two processes of "refilling and emptying" have a common denominator represented by emptying the mind of old corrupt concepts to have it filled with correct ones. With regard to belief-based behavior, the Sufi methodology derives its fundamentals from the Holy Qur'ân. The Holy Qur'ân denounced the ignorant people who persist in following their fathers' corrupt ideas. Allah, Exalted be He, said:

﴿***Rather, they say, "Indeed, we found our fathers upon a religion, and we are in their footsteps [rightly] guided.***﴾ [Az-Zukhruf (Decoration): 22]

But Allah, Glory be to Him, replied to them in another verse saying:

﴿***...Even though their fathers understood nothing, nor were they guided?***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 170]

Therefore, contemporary Islamic discourse is in urgent need of renewing its approach by focusing on the cultural self or identity that represents the core of this discourse. It, thus, must submit this cultural self to the process of freeing, salvation or emptying so that it can rid it of such harmful intellectual views such as alienation, fanaticism, excessiveness, extremism, secularization, blind imitation, etc. Thus, it can recharge it with true, intellectual values and vigor that springs from an authentic belief.

The Islamic cultural identity is in dire need today of a refill – after being emptied - with the notion of reconciliation with the past through intellectual work based on understanding and deduction, so that it can remove all the confusion, deal with current issues objectively and clearly and, thus, apply the principle of consolidation which is suitable for today's world. If this is achieved, we can then provide our cultural identity with the jurisprudence of moderation which has many characteristics, most important of which are facilitation, tolerance and dealing gently with others. This can be achieved as a part of an enlightenment project within a comprehensive cultural scope. In this way, we can bring the Muslim cultural identity back to life.

There is no question that the process of cultural refilling, in general, and that of intellectual refilling, in particular, focuses on instilling the true creed into the self. This principle will provide it with the material and spiritual powers that grant it the ability to be innovative and effective, and to interact well with the challenges of the age and deal with them according to cultural standards.

Providing ourselves with the components that are necessary for construction and development enables the Islamic identity to rid itself of the restrictions of dependency and the blind imitation that shackles it.

As a result, the Islamic identity can have its own characteristics which help it to get rid of defeatism in order to achieve a cultural triumph. Overcoming defeatism is the solid rule through which we can resist all forms of occupation of the land and intellect. Thus, we can reach a national independence with regard to the decision and so defend the permanent principles of Islamic discourse which grant the Muslim mind the strength to deal with various foreign terms and concepts. In addition, we should make use of the critical approach as a means of classification and selection, and of the creation of cultural terms that stem from our identity and the characteristics of our culture.

Consequently, the importance of refilling the cultural identity is manifest in the need to remove some of the methodological obstacles that block the path of Islamic discourse. It is also manifest in the need to pave the way for this discourse to reach the phase of inventiveness and effectiveness and thus contribute in building human civilization.

d. Correlation not disassociation between religiosity and patriotism

The conflict between religiousness and patriotism is one of the contrived methodological obstacles that block the path of contemporary Islamic discourse. The mutual rejection between religiousness and patriotism is not supported by any evidence nor is it supported by any reality. Even the often repeated saying, "Religion is for God and the homeland is for all" that the nationalists use as a pretext for rejecting religiousness is not supported by either reason or history.

Since patriotism is attachment to one's country, it is the driving force behind the Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation. Muslims, Christians and Jews raise the banner of defending Palestine based on their common, religious history.

On the other hand, religious commitment means defending rights. This was embodied in the Algerian resistance against the French occupation.

The Algerian resistance adopted the principle of liberating Algeria from this occupation using *Jihâd* as a means for defending the homeland. The banners of "Allah is the Greatest" and "Long live Algeria" succeeded in mobilizing the public to fight the French troops.

The people who try to separate religious commitment from patriotism are either ignorant of the facts of both or are infiltrators into both groups since true religiousness demands that one should open one's mind and heart to accept the requirements of patriotism and the duties of religion.

It is not a coincidence that the Messenger of Islam, Muhammad (PBUH), addressed his beloved homeland, Mecca, saying: "*You are the most beloved to Allah among Allah's lands, and you are also the most beloved to me among Allah's lands.*"

Also, we find in the Islamic traditions a statement to the effect that, "love of one's homeland is a part of one's faith." Therefore, there is no faith without patriotism and no patriotism without Islam. The merging of patriotism with religious commitment has often been, throughout history, a basis upon which civilizations were established, and any case other than this is an exception.

Thus, any extremism or excessiveness in the name of either religiousness or patriotism (at the expense of the other) should be disregarded.

When we find in the Arab Islamic discourse someone who supports patriotism at the expense of religiousness, we just regard this as utter nonsense and a restriction of the concept of patriotism. If we regard Islam as the refuge from deviation, injustice and aberrance, we, in return, regard patriotism as something that runs in one's blood.

By this union of patriotism and religiousness, we can build a person who is psychologically balanced, mentally whole and morally tolerant. Our Islamic discourse must derive its strength from this mixture of religiousness and patriotism.

The discourse which seeks to spread its message using techniques beyond this valid intellectual premise will end up with negative results and dire consequences such as division, alienation and denunciation of each others' ideas. These are the characteristics of the disability of our contemporary Islamic discourse today, which requires evaluation and reassessment of its form and content.

Summary

We have tried in the previous pages to discuss the current situation of contemporary Islamic discourse by defining its defects, and diagnosing the symptoms of its crises and the characteristics of its disability in order to overcome them. We have also tried to analyze contemporary Islamic discourse to enable us to determine the state of indecision and hesitation that characterizes it. The driving force behind all these attempts was our desire to intellectually analyze this defective discourse so that we can identify the crises from which it suffers and which hinder it from cultural innovation and contribution to the progress of the human intellect.

Through the process of diagnosis and analysis, we have come to know the level of intellectual deterioration which our contemporary Islamic discourse has reached. This represents the disastrous crisis which prevents our ideology from playing its leading humane role with which it used to be distinguished throughout the ages and that made great contributions to different fields of science and knowledge.

We must quickly fight the mental crisis with which our Islamic intellect has been afflicted, making use of specialists in our culture who have knowledge of the diseases of nations and who are experts in the obstacles of human progress, so that we can restore our lost intellectual balance.

At this level of diagnosis, we can say that the reasons behind the setbacks and the elements of disability from which our Islamic intellect suffers are not to be found in the Islamic mind, which competently played its role in human progress in the past. Moreover, the obstacles of progress cannot be attributed to the nature of our culture or our civilization. Rather, the real reasons behind our sufferings lie in external factors. This does not mean that we can or should lay the blame for our problems on others.

The fact that cannot be denied, except by a stubborn person, is that our Islamic intellect has been afflicted with many successive blows, starting with the destructive foreign occupation and ending with the dangers of globalization which hit our homelands and devoured its wealth, stripped our people of their free will and marginalized the decision makers in our society.

For all these reasons, we expect that the response will be able to face the challenges and shocks. This response should start by releasing ourselves from particular restrictions and limitations and then overcoming the obstacles that block our path to our goals. From among the steps we have to take and the obstacles we have to overcome, we have focused on the role played by the phenomenon of the conflict between geography and history as well as on the clash between Islamic universality and modern globalization; the conflict between blind imitation and fanaticism; the symptoms of selflimitation; the psychological hesitation; and intellectual poverty. How can we overcome all these problems? Who is entrusted with this task? Is it the task of the politicians or the mission of the scholars and thinkers?

There is convincing evidence that political discourse has failed to achieve the nation's ambitions. Also evidence reveals the inability of Islamic ideology - in its current approach - to raise the standard of the nation's discourse to the level of its high ambitions. Therefore, it is crucial to reassess the approach that Islamic discourse follows so that it can fulfill what the political discourse, influenced by foreign pressures, failed to achieve. This cannot be accomplished without adopting a renewed approach that derives its sources from the treasures of our authentic ideology, which values the true heritage of the human intellect.

Furthermore, this renewed approach must be characterized by a call for unity in its broadest sense and for brotherhood in its different forms, taking into account that cooperation and alliance between the different intellectual fields are vital. This is the goal of any evaluative research on the components of contemporary Islamic discourse concerning a reassessment of its structure and methods.

Toward Rational Islamic Discourse

Dr. Muhammad Al-Fâdil Al-Lâfi(*)

The role of women in life is so great, since life in all its aspects is a partnership between man and woman. Among the female Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) were teachers, nurses and even warriors. They competently and positively participated in all activities. Women's participation in the different fields of life was not under debate; they used to play their natural role in life as a vicegerent of Allah on earth and fulfill the responsibility of propagating the Islamic message.

Introduction:

The contemporary Islamic discourse is one of the recent issues that have come to engage Muslim thinkers. Earlier, in the Islamic circles it was seen as a mere act of guidance and warning. It was not engaged in the theorization of the problems of religious discourse, which is one of the current issues resulting from the pressure of the fact that we feel ashamed of openly discussing and acknowledge our negligence of its importance. Unfortunately, we wake up at the shock of events and the gravity of the calamity only to find ourselves forced to comply with the impositions of others and requirements of reality. Therefore, we try to take hold of the issue, and deal with the dilemma

(*) Researcher at the European Institute for Human Science (France).

through a temporary discourse, waiting for a more effective solution inspired by the Islamic *Sharī'ah* and conforming to the requirements of the present age. Moreover, such a solution should follow in the footsteps of the Muslim reformers who contributed significantly to the rationalization of the Muslim nation and its emancipation from the fetters of omission and languor.

Most regional and international Islamic institutions - if not all of them - have rushed to hold many conferences and seminars to discuss the problems of religious discourse. The titles of such conferences and seminars resemble one another and the list of the conferees, even the guests, are the same. This may indicate that these institutions either lack the profound knowledge of such problematic subjects or ignore them and concern themselves with trivial issues. As a result, we are battered by harassment and a sense of siege as we see Muslims, or indeed any Arab-looking person, being treated in the West with suspicion and doubts, and becoming victims of random accusations. The malicious media, motivated by a hostile stand, nourishes this inimical attitude by instigating the Western societies against the Muslims. It revives the old, bad memories of hostile attitudes against Muslims living in the West and takes this revival as an opportunity to get rid of them at the expense of citizenship and social stability.

What is more is that those who are used to represent the Muslim nation are portrayed as being incompetent and malicious, while the qualified scholars and preachers of this nation are ignored. Besides, there is the malicious media conspiracy that is based upon deliberately selecting figures who are ignorant of the basic facts of this religion to speak in the name of Islam and its people or to choose the staunch supporters of secularism, who adopt an antagonistic attitude against religion itself and disdain its adherents, as such spokespersons. Therefore, the responsibility of the scholarly verification and treatment of the issues of religious discourse must be entrusted to competent and qualified people who have participated in the Islamic movement and intellectual interactions, and are free of the transient consciousness of the dilemma, which is not a sustainable remedy for the nation's diseases either at the individual or communal levels, from among Muslim citizens in the West in particular and wherever they live in general.

There is no way to set things right and leave this vicious circle but to firmly adhere to the Islamic teachings and reshape the Muslim mentality according to the sound and established legal criteria and restrictions. These restrictions will instill the values of the tolerant Islam, get rid of the defects

and negligence and present the essence of Islam and its quality of mercy to all mankind. Through these criteria, we can enter into peer-topeer dialogue with the other observing the ethics of social contact and concentrating on the universal human principles as well as avoiding unjustified provocation, instigation and belittlement. We should be inspired by the determination and the good manners of the Muslim preacher in sympathizing with and caring about others, and work from the perspective of sharing with humanity the goodness with which the Sacred Books and Messengers were sent.

Thus, having a positive attitude is a main factor for effective communal interaction which elevates man from the stage of passive consumption to constructive action, which leads to different forms of interdependence, participation and fair sharing, guided by the virtue of advising one another and encouraging good deeds, seeking to perform as well as benefit from them, each according to their own capabilities and faculties. The intelligent Muslim who is aware of the obligations of his religion is extrovert by nature; he has a message in life, and those who bear messages must communicate and interact with people. The Muslim should be helpful. Islam calls upon its followers to show benevolent ethics and manners, apply them in real situations and follow in the Prophet's footsteps as he (PBUH) is an embodiment of the teachings of the Qur'ân.

Islam invites Muslims to adhere to the injunctions of Allah, Glorified be He, when dealing with others. Accordingly, we can understand the nature of the Islamic social morals that govern the behavior of the true and good Muslim in establishing relations of social dialogue and inviting others to take these manners as an authentic method that replaces their hostile attitudes. In the light of this creed, people can remodel and adjust their imagination and social activities. Hence, virtues, the quest for the common good and different forms of communication, are rendered as acts of devotion that bring man nearer to Allah, Exalted be He, rather than being mere commitments enjoined by belonging to one's society and customs. Doing good deeds leads to success. Allah, Glorified be He, says:

﴿***...And do good that you may succeed.***﴾ [Al-Hajj (Pilgrimage):77]

Therefore, the Muslim hastens to do good deeds with certainty of the reward from Allah, Glorified be He, when doing anything only for His sake. The Prophet (PBUH) taught us saying:

«Every day the sun rises, there is an act of charity (written for the person) when administering justice between two people, helping a person to

ride on his mount or lifting the luggage of someone upon his mount. A good word is an act of charity, every step you make toward (in your way to perform) prayer is an act of charity and the removal of harmful things from the path is an act of charity. »[1]

The best Muslim is the one whom people expect his good deeds and are protected from his evil ones. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*The best of you is he whose good is hoped for and from his evil people are safe, and the worst of you is he whose good is not hoped for and from his evil people are not safe.*»[2]

Additionally, one of the causes of the removal of any grace and the result of wrath and indignation upon man is stinginess and withholding what Allah, Exalted be He, has given us from His bounty. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*Every man whom Allah has blessed with a favor and increased it for him, indicates that He (Allah) has authorized him (this person) with some of the people's interests but he shows boredom (with people's interests), he thus makes this favor liable to be taken away from him.* »[3]

The Prophet (PBUH) has clear and concise expressions that correspond to the Words of the Glorious Qur'ân. For example, the Prophet (PBUH) said to Sufyân Ibn `Abdullah AThaqafi advising him:

«*Say, 'I believe in Allah,' then follow (the Straight Path of Islam).*»[4]

This Prophetic saying corresponds to Allah's saying:

﴿***Indeed, those who have said, "Our Lord is Allah" and then remained on a right course - the angels will descend upon them [saying], "Do not fear and do not grieve but receive good tidings of Paradise, which you were promised.***﴾ [Fussilat (Expounded): 30]

This has inspired Imâm Muslim to name the chapter of *Al-Istiqâmah* (Uprightness) as "Chapter on the Collective Picture of Islam". Uprightness emanating from belief in Allah encompasses all virtues and good morals, and from it the features of benevolence and good deeds branch out. The smiling, shiny face and the cheerful, kind heart that sympathize with people's afflictions, regardless of the differences in religions and backgrounds, are some of the main principles of the tolerant religion of

(1) Related by Muslim.
(2) Related by At-Tirmidhi who deemed it as Hasan (Approved) and Sahih (Authentic) Hadith.
(3) Related by At-Tabarânî in 'Al-Awsat' with a good chain of transmitters.
(4) Related by Muslim.

Islam. In the Western world, the patients may find well-equipped hospitals and qualified doctors who treat them and save their lives. However, patients rarely find kindness, sincere good words and prayers, and true and genuine feelings. [1]

These aspects can be useful ways for the Muslims to propagate their mission and address these people with a fresh spirit of a social contact based on a sincere desire for peaceful communication and co-operation. When the Prophet (PBUH) visited a sick Jewish boy, he did not forget calling him to Islam. The Prophet (PBUH) was conscious of the impact of his visit on the boy and his father, who were overwhelmed with his graciousness and courteousness[2].

The present dynamics of life have changed a lot of the ways of the spontaneous social solidarity and have given new perspectives to the meanings of tolerance, such as acquaintance, mutual understanding, cooperation, accepting others and coexistence.

Ethics of Social Contact and Interaction:

The thoughts and the behavior of the Muslim spring from the tolerant religion of Islam, which in its essence contains certain goals and objectives that guide its rulings and directives. These goals aim at achieving welfare and happiness for people, some of which are clearly mentioned in the Noble Qur'ân and the Prophet's *Sunnah*, while others are taken into consideration by religious scholars when deducing rulings. [3] In both conditions, man is asked to believe and apply, i.e., s/he is required to have a conscious understanding of the actual religious texts and then apply them in his/her benevolence-based deeds. This is the true faith.

Every intentional human behavior must be based on two main factors: the outward appearance and the motive. While the first is the action itself which is carried out at a certain time, such as the movements of prayer in its due time and giving charity to the poor, the latter is the inner feeling of a duty to act on the divine commandments. This feeling is the outcome of firm belief in the existence of Allah, Exalted be He, Who sent the Messengers and revealed the Sacred Books in order for mankind to

(1) Muhammad 'Alî Al-Hâshimî, ibid, p. 355.

(2) See Yahyâ Ibn Ibrâhîm Al-Yahyâ, Nafhat 'Abîr min Sîrat Al-Bashîr An-Nadhîr (A Whiff of the Fragrance of the Prophet's Biography), 1st edition (Al-Qâsim Publishing House) p. 78.

(3) 'Abdul-Majîd An-Najjâr, Fiqh At-Tadayyun Fahaman wa Tanzîlan (The Jurisprudence of Religiousness, Understanding and Revelation) (Az-Zaytûnah Publishing House,), p. 82, 1995.

achieve happiness in both the worldly life and the Hereafter. In this way, the creed is the real motive of behavior in the sight of Islam. [1] This is the true meaning of Allah's Saying:

﴿*Say, "Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my life and my death are for Allah, Lord of the worlds.*﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 162]

Accordingly, the highest level of faith is to have belief in the heart that the tongue conforms with and then work according to that belief. Further, this condition must prevail over the heart and all the organs of the body so that the individual behaves in total compliance with it. [2]

The Muslim's understanding of the meaning of social contact and its implications springs from his standard source of knowledge by which he judges how he views matters and his personal conduct, which determine the process of social contact with other civilizations. This social contact is built on four major factors according to the Qur'anic text as follows:

a- Vicegerency on Earth: Islam has made the ultimate goal of man in life to be fulfillment of the vicegerency on earth in a way that realizes the purpose of his/her existence, preserves the constituents of his mission and gives meaning to the honorable status granted to man by Allah and the subjugation of other creatures to him. This is not due to any lack or disability of the Granter of succession as any deficiency is impossible for Him, Glorified be He. Moreover, Allah, Exalted be He, calls man "*Khalîfah*", i.e., vicegerent, because he acts on Allah's behalf in judging between those who are legally obligated to observe the precepts of religion from among his creatures. [3]

The vicegerent is Adam, and his commission is the fulfillment of the command of Allah, Glorified be He, which is the habitation of earth, being guided by the revelation, and to pass these commands of Allah, Exalted be He, to his descendants. The task also includes enforcing the laws that regulate the affairs of his descendants in accordance with their great number and varied behavior. In this regard, the following Qur'anic verse refers to the urgent need for humanity to install a vicegerent so as to settle

(1) 'Abdul-Majîd An-Najjâr, Mind and Behavior in the Islamic Structure (Tunisia: The Publications of Al-Janûb Madnîn Publishing House,), 1980, pp. 148 and the following pages with a slight change.

(2) 'Abdur-Rahmân Ibn Khaldûn, The Introduction (Cairo, Dâr Ash-Sha'b) p. 426 .

(3) Al-Fakhr Ar-Râzi, At-Tafsîr Al-Kabîr (the Great Interpretation of the Glorious Qur'ân) and Mafâtîh Al-Ghayb (Keys of the Unseen) (Lebanon, Al-Fikr Publishing House, 1\2\182, 1995) .

the disputes between people; it is impossible for humankind to maintain stability without such a vicegerent. (1) Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels. "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" He [Allah] said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know.***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 30]

According to the principle of vicegerency, the purpose of man's life is to populate the earth, following Allah's commandments and prohibitions, Exalted be He. In every materialistic and spiritual activity, man should seek the pleasure and satisfaction of Allah, Glorified be He(2).

b) The human community and the fundamentals of social contact This is what is implied by vicegerency on earth. The life of man can never be well except by living among a group of people fulfilling the universal principle of interaction including reproduction and positive beneficial cooperation so that the conditions of the community and its continuity can be fulfilled. This is the basic principle of religion and the aim of all the heavenly laws which brought happiness to mankind and guided it to the ways of prosperity and success based on piety, godliness and excellence in worship by which they gain the pleasure of Allah, Glory be to Him.

Accordingly, piety is the standard of man's benevolence and preference in the sight of Allah, Exalted be He. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿***O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Omniscient.***﴾ [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

It is noteworthy that Allah, Glory be to Him, used the word "mankind" not "believers" to emphasize the relation between the earlier word and the purpose of reminding people that they were created from the same origin and so they are all equal. He, Exalted be He, wants to inform us that the standard of excellence is determined by virtues, and that preference in the sight of

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(1) Muhammad At-Tâhir Ibn 'Ishûr, Liberation and Enlightenment (Tunisia: Ad-Dâr At-Tûnisiyyah Publishing House), vol. 1, p.399.

(2) 'Abdul-Majîd An-Najjâr, Jurisprudence of the Islamic Civilization, one of the series of the influence of the Islamic nation on civilization, the 1st edition (Lebanon: Al-Gharb Al-Islamî Publishing House) vol. 1, p. 52 .

Islam is also determined by the level of piety[1]. So, the distinction with which Allah, Glory be to Him, inspired people is a robust system aiming at strengthening the ties between people. In this regard, there is also a wise implication from this, i.e., scorning, insulting and calling one another with offensive nicknames result from the competitive hatred among individuals and tribes. Allah, Exalted be He, included all these merits in His good instructions, but such bad behavior as that mentioned above denotes that people have heeded the wise divine distinction only to use it for improper, malicious purposes and have left its positive points which are represented by the saying of Allah, Glory be to Him, ***"that you may know one another."*** Allah, Exalted be He, followed this saying with, ***"Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you,"*** i.e. if you, mankind, desire to compete, compete in piety as Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿***So for this let the competitors compete.***﴾ [Al-Mutaffifin (The Stinters):26]

The meaning of the verse in Sura of Al-Hujurât is illustrated by the Prophet's statement during the farewell pilgrimage: [2]

«O people, your Lord is One, and your father is one (i.e., Adam). Indeed, an Arab has no advantage over a non-Arab, nor has a non-Arab advantage over an Arab, nor has a white man advantage over a black man, nor has a black man advantage over a white man except in (the criterion of) piety.» [3]

This historical sermon emphasized even the right of neighbors. The Prophet (PBUH) repeatedly kept reminding Muslims of the neighbor's right until some companions thought that the neighbor would be among one's heirs. Abû Umâmah, may Allah be pleased with him, narrated:

«In the Farewell Sermon, I heard the Prophet (PBUH), while he was on his mount called "Al-Jad'â' ", saying, "I enjoin you (to be good) with your neighbor." The Prophet (PBUH) kept repeating this till I thought, that he (the Prophet) might confer upon him (the neighbor) the right of inheritance.» [4]

Besides, the Prophet (PBUH) regarded showing graciousness to one's neighbor and avoiding harming him as a sign and a result of sincere belief in Allah, Exalted be He, and the Last Day. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

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(1) See: Sayyid Qutb, Ma'âlim fî At-Tarîq (Milestones), 4th edition (The World Islamic Union of Student Organizations, 1985) p. 109.
(2) Muhammad At-Tâhir Ibn 'Âshûr, ibid, 26/258, with a slight change.
(3) Related by Imâm Ahmad.
(4) Related by Muslim.

«He who believes in Allah and the Last Day should do good to his neighbor.» (1)

In another *Hadîth*, he (PBUH) said:

«Whoever sleeps while being sated and his neighbor is hungry and he knows this does not believe in me.» (2)

After all, the true meaning of acquaintance is not just by knowing the identity of the neighbor, but it extends to include beneficial, positive communication and cooperation, which render the members of society an effective unified group that transcends and disregards any particularities for the sake of building a stronger and more amenable society that makes the distinguishing marks of every nation a factor that leads to variation and enrichment to form a new world society that incorporates all individuals and groups with their different features.

In this sense, common perceptions are honored and the particularities of the culture and fabric of the civilization of a society, which mark pluralism and variation, are not a contradiction or disparity in the society, but they are upheld. This is what is referred to in the former Qur'anic verses in which pluralism of the societies and tribes is one of the signs of Allah, Glory be to Him, that must be employed for the common interest, not for boosting the hateful, racial discrimination which contributed in various ways to the dissolution of many strong societies. Consequently, many victims of this racial discrimination have found their need for security and respect in Islam, which holds people equal except with regard to the virtue of piety and benevolence. Because of this, all members of different societies enjoy solidarity, co-operation, inter-dependence, peace and safety instead of alienation, deprivation and persecution. In other words, members of the society have equal rights and duties and they will have the motive to devote themselves to the welfare of their homeland. They will fight together against the oppressor who endangers their security and stability regardless of his motives, which may be false religious inducement, aggressive ethnic attitudes or an ideological impetus that is imposed on people forcefully even when it is enjoined on people in the name of democracy. Democracy in its best forms in the civilization aims at respecting the others' rights, even if they are a minority. Accordingly, we can talk about the social contact between civilizations, which is regarded in our Islam as an act of worship that brings

(1) Related by Muslim.
(2) Related by At-Tabarânî and Al-Bazzâr.

us nearer to Allah, Glory be to Him. The relationship of Muslims with others is based on social contact, co-operation, dutifulness and justice.[1]

b) The Purpose of the Creation and Keeping Allah's Covenant The purpose for which the Jinn and Mankind were created is to worship only Allah, Glory be to Him. Thus, worship must include all aspects of religion, since restricting worship to the performance of some religious obligations makes the aim of creating the Jinn and the Mankind distant from their other obligations. This misconception may lead to the suspension of some religious matters. Allah illustrated this point in the Glorious Qur'ân saying:

﴿And I did not create the jinn and mankind except to worship Me.﴾
[Adh-Dhâriyât (The Winnowers): 56]

So, worship in the Islamic creed is a special, comprehensive term. Allah, Glory be to Him, made all mankind as His servants in all their affairs, small or great. Allah's Commandments and Prohibitions include all human affairs. [2] There is no work that is carried out except there are regulations for it within the domain of the Islamic *Sharî'ah*[3].

Consequently, worship includes all actions that please Allah, Glory be to Him, in private or in public, whether these be words or deeds. It is not limited to some certain rituals. `Abdullah Ibn Mas`ûd, may Allah be pleased with him, prohibited a group of people from Kûfah from building a mosque in the desert with the intention of dissociating themselves from people and dedicating themselves to only worship. He only left them when they dismantled the pillars of the building and corrected their behavior.

The question that raises itself is: What is the best act of worship? Ibnul- Qayyim[4], may Allah have mercy upon him, answered this question saying that Muslim scholars have four opinions concerning this question. The most outstanding view states that the best act of worship is that which benefits its doer as well as others. It is better than that which just benefits its doer. The supporters of this opinion think that helping the poor and the needy and the accomplishment of people's needs are among the best acts of worship. They quote the Prophet's saying:

(1) As-Sayyid Sâbiq, "Fiqh As-Sunnah", 4th edition, (Beirut: Dâr Al-Fikr Publishing House, vol. 3, p.13. 1983.
(2) `Abdul-Majîd An-Najjâr, The Value of Mankind, 1st edition, Az-Zaytûnah Publishing House, p.33. 1996 .
(3) Ash-Shâtibî, Al-Muwâfaqât (The Agreements) 1st edition (Giza: Ibn `Affân Publishing House), the Introduction vol. 9. 1\108. 1996.
(4) Madârij As-Sâlikîn (Cairo: As-Sunnah Al-Muhammadiyyah Publishing House).

«All people are supported by Allah, and the most beloved of them to Him is the most benevolent to His supported people.»(1)

The fulfillment of such a kind of worship is a must. It is a covenant Allah, Glory be to Him, has taken from the children of Adam and He will ask them about it on the Day of Judgment. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿Allah has promised those who have believed among you and done righteous deeds that He will surely grant them succession [of authority] upon the earth just as He granted it to those before them and that He will surely establish for them [therein] their religion which He has chosen for them and that He will surely substitute for them, after their fear, security, [as] they worship Me, not associating anything with Me. But whoever disbelieves after that - then those are the defiantly disobedient.﴾

[An-Nûr (The Light): 55]

Allah, Glory be to Him, has promised His faithful servants who do good deeds that He will surely make them His vicegerents on the earth by dominating and populating it in accordance with the laws of Allah, Glorified be He. However, Allah, Glory be to Him, has made the qualification for deserving this succession to be that one worships only Him, without any partners. This indicates that worship includes all aspects of life(2) and that people follow what the Creator ordained for them when thinking or carrying out any act. In this sense, worship extends to cover all the lawful actions done for the sake of Allah, Glorified be He, regardless of whether they are attitudes and feelings or actual physical actions(3).

d) The Trust of being a witness over the people

Many Qur'anic Suras address mankind using a generic phrase such as "O people". This phrase has been taken as referring to the mind and reasoning, urging people to get rid of all that spoil their sense of humanity by urging adherence to the right way and working in accordance with its guidance. Accordingly, the essence of the call to embrace the truth and the core of the fundamentals of Islam include the following:

- Worshipping Allah, Glorified be He, with no partners.
- Believing in all of Allah's Messengers without any exception.
- Believing in the Day of Resurrection and the Recompense in the Hereafter.

(1) Related by Abû Ya'lâ.
(2) See Sayyid Qutb, "The Future is for this Religion" (The World Islamic Union of Student Organizations,) p. 25, 1988.
(3) 'Abdul-'Azîz Ibn 'Abduallah Al-Humaydî, previous reference, pp. 187 and what follows it.

These matters have been expressed by the word *Birr* "dutifulness", which entails a combination of all good deeds, including the personal attitude and feelings, virtues and also the good deeds that man does to get nearer to Allah. For Allah, Glory be to Him, "dutifulness" means the reward, contentment with and divine love for His slaves. Dutifulness does not depend only on the outward appearances but it depends on the reality and essence of matters and the spirit with which one fulfills one's obligations. This includes three kinds of dutifulness:

- **Dutifulness in the creed:** Its essence is the belief in Allah, Glory be to Him, the Last Day, the Angels, the Books and the Prophets.

- **Dutifulness in one's character:** This is represented in two main commitments; namely, achieving our duties and fulfifilling our promises; and withstanding distress, overcoming the obstacles of life and being patient during poverty and hardships.

- **Dutifulness in work:** man devotes his soul and wealth for the sake of Allah, Glory be to Him, and for the welfare of His creatures. Work is the food of the creed. Faith is kept in the heart and its attestation and source of nourishment and preservation is the good deeds[1] that benefifit all mankind, without any exceptions. Dutifulness is the essence of the Islamic mission that enjoins justice and prohibits injustice and makes its glorious teachings and values of sympathy, compassion, cooperation, altruism, self-sacrifice and self-denial a tool for alleviating the burdens of life and for softening the hearts of people to make them considerate of one another[2].

While the Noble Qur'ân uses a universal call directed to all people, it also uses a special call directed to the faithful who believe in the Qur'anic verse:

﴿***And fulfill [every] commitment. Indeed, the commitment is ever [that about which one will be] questioned.***﴾ [Al- Isrâ' (The Night Journey):34]

Man has an inherent tendency to worship Allah, Glory be to Him, in all his affairs - according to the Qur'anic verse:

﴿***Say, "Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds.***﴾ [Al-An`âm (The Cattle): 162]

(1) Mahmûd Shaltût, Interpretation of the Noble Qur'ân, 8th edition (Cairo: As-Shurûq Publishing House, vol. 1 pp. 71 and the following.

(2) As-Sayyid Sâbiq, ibid., 3\7.

Allah, Exalted be He, subjected to man whatever exists in this world so that the task of worship in both its ritualistic and behavioral forms could be simple and easy. He, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿***And He has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth - all from Him. Indeed in that are signs for a people who give thought.***﴾ [Al-Jâthiyah (Kneeling): 13]

In this way, the goal of the settlement and population of the earth is fulfilled:

﴿***He has brought you fourth from the earth and settled you in it, so ask forgiveness of Him and then repent to Him. Indeed, my Lord is Near and Responsive.***﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 61]

The status of being a witness over the people can be achieved. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿***And thus We have made you a median [i.e. just] community that you will be witnesses over the people and the Messenger will be a witness over you.***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

While this Qur'anic verse denotes that Islam[1] is the moderate religion[2] in terms of its vision, creed, regulations, harmony, thinking, feelings, commitments and relations[3], the state of being witnesses represents a comprehensive approach for Muslims when dealing with non-Muslims. This approach is based on knowledge, presentation and justice in all matters so that the witness can be beneficial to those who receive the message[4]. It is being a witness over people that factual knowledge supports the facts of Islam, the universe and humanity. It is also being a witness over people that we, the Muslims, have told them these facts wishing to save them and spread good among them. It is, thus, a just testimony that takes a median position between the farthest extremes of ideologies and behavior, which can be a refuge from extremism and a means of justice for judging among people in terms of equality, resisting the oppressors and supporting the oppressed. [5]

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(1) Muhammad At-Tâhir Ibn 'Âshûr, Liberation and Enlightenment, 17\352.
(2) Ibid., 2\20.
(3) Sayyid Qutb, In the light of the Noble Qur'ân, 15th legal edition (Cairo, Ash-Shurûq Publishing House,) vol. 1, p. 131, 1988.
(4) 'Abdul-Majîd An-Najjâr, The Jurisprudence of the Islamic Civilization, p. 84 .
(5) Ibid, p. 121.

Dialogue and its Justifications

The relationship among individuals and groups cannot be organized within a peaceful social framework free of stagnation and fear of the others unless they are built on robust principles of communication and dialogue that help to build bridges of rational communication and to establish mutual trust as a principle and value that are necessary for the culture and that shape the consciousness of the society with regard to its simple interactions or complex institutions.

When peace is active in our conscience and prevails in our homes and societies, i.e. when the principles of brotherhood, equality and justice are translated into real actions and the barriers of prejudice, oppression and injustice are removed(1), social peace will reign among all people without the unfair discrimination that is based on false religious ideologies or erroneous human opinions. Such discrimination can lead to backwardness and destruction according to the Muslim sociologist `Abdur-Rahmân Ibn Khaldûn.(2) Accordingly, there exist real reasons for dialogue, some of which are commonly agreed on by all people while the others are restricted to the Muslims and attributed to their culture. After all, the culture of dialogue is a must for the following reasons:

1. Religious Necessity: Anything which is needed to fulfill any obligation also takes the status of an obligation, and the propagation of Islam requires direct communication and close social connection with people, via dialogue and exchanging views. Among the prominent requirements of the Islamic *Da'wah* is propagation of religion, which in turn necessitates direct conversation, which cannot be achieved without immediate engagement. This corresponds to the command of Allah, the Almighty, Who says:

﴿***Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction...***﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bee): 125]

The Prophet (PBUH) warned Muslims saying:

«*How many a neighbor who clings to their neighbor on the Day of Resurrection, saying, 'O Lord, this (person) closed his door before me and withheld his kindness.'*»(3)

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(1) Mahdî Fadllul-lâh, With the Political Intellect of Sayyidd Qutb, 1st edition (Beirut: Ar- Risâlah Publishing House, p. 166, 1978.

(2) From the introduction to the book of Lessons and the History of the Arabs and the Non-Arabs and their Sultans. 1st edition (Beirut: Al-Kutub Al-`Ilmiyyah Publishing House, 2000), p. 223.

(3) Related by Al-Bukhârî in "*Al-Adab Al-Mufrad*" (The Independent Good Manners).

According to this *Hadîth*, the God-fearing Muslim should show all love and care to his neighbors and not be stingy or neglectful towards them.

2. Practical Necessity: Life cannot go on without communication, acquaintance and breaking the psychological barriers that suppress the initiative to know one another and get close to other people in order to realize the harmony, co-operation and interdependence in the Muslim society that comply with the true nature of Muslims. The true Muslim guided by the teachings of his faith, the lessons drawn from the *Sîrah*[1] and the biography of leading Muslim scholars cares about people and saves no effort to empower them and awaken the spirit of social solidarity.

Islam is against the life of isolation. Muslims should be open to people and be an active constituent in the formation and regulation of the society, and not a passive element and an empty factor. The history of Islam and the Muslim nation is full of bright episodes when the Muslim society presented one of the best examples of the rightful society that tolerated differences on the basis that diversity of creation is one of the signs of Allah. Allah says:

﴿And among His signs is the creation of the heavens and the earth and the difference of your languages and your colors. Indeed in that are signs for those of sound knowledge.﴾ [Ar-Rûm (The Romans): 22]

This diversity is considered as a productive power, an enriching factor and a way of interaction between people in life.

Life will not go on without interaction and interdependence. Were it not for the intertwinement and intersection of the interests and the immediate outward attitudes of the people, inactivity and sluggishness would not go away and any concealed capabilities would not reveal themselves. The Muslim nation is an active nation. Social bonds and relations are properly established and joined thanks to the active participation of all members of the society, without any discrimination among them except on the basis of beneficent and righteous deeds. Work in Islam is a kind of worship for which Muslims are rewarded if it is performed correctly and for which they are punished if it is neglected.

3. An Existential Necessity: Dialogue is closely connected with the future of the Islamic presence in Europe. As far as Muslims are able to maintain dialogue and present their vision of the world, life, religion and coexistence, they shall be able to eliminate the erroneous historical

(1) A term that refers to the biography of the Prophet (PBUH).

stereotype of the West about Islam and Muslims. The most important need for Muslims now is to be in contact with the common people and not to be confined to the elite classes, who are more likely to have predetermined judgments and ideological narrow-mindedness, even animosities related to a hostile past affected by the crusades, wars of independence, colonialism and national liberation movements.

The conscious participation begins with explaining to the people the great Islamic heritage, which contains good for all. Once people have captured the true image of Islam, they will naturally incline to what realizes eternal happiness for them.

This is the nature of man in his search for the good that leads to security and peace of mind. However, this depends on the ability of Muslims to convince others of the fact that Islam includes objective characteristics which provide another meaning to people's life. Among these characteristics are:

A. Comprehensiveness, Integration and Universality:

By this, we mean the ability of Islam to deal with various aspects of life, govern all acts of man, explain the right way of life and determine the relation between Allah and man regardless of race, religion or color. Indeed, Islam provides the integrated and unique methodology that is capable of regulating life with all its different sides, whether doctrinal, legal, political or economic. It covers different aspects of life and responds to the numerous and diverse necessities of the people. It is a universal religion in all its rulings, principles and directions and a mercy for all humankind. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], but as a mercy for all the worlds.***﴾ [Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets): 107]

Islam is guidance for all people. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿***And We have not sent you except as a giver of glad tidings and a Warner to all mankind, but most people know not.***﴾ [Saba' (Sheba): 28]

B. Moderation and Balance

These are collective characteristics referring to moderation, tolerance and non-excessiveness in everything. Allah described the Muslim nation in the Noble Qur'ân saying:

﴿***And We have made you a median (moderate) nation that you will be a witness over mankind...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

The moderation, referred to in the verse, is closely related to the characteristic of a balanced comprehensiveness which avoids the recklessness, extremism and clashes that came from the so-called positive philosophical concepts and other extremist religious ideologies which resulted from distorted conceptions – whether due to additions, extractions or erroneous interpretations – which were introduced into the essence of the Islamic creed. This balanced comprehensiveness is referred to in the glorious verse which says: ﴿***You can see no fault in the creation of the Most Gracious***﴾ [Al-Mulk (The Kingdom):3]

This moderation strikes a balance between the divine Will and the permanence of the universal rules.

C. Positiveness and Realism:

Positiveness with regard to Allah is represented in the active relationship between Allah and the universe, and life and man. Positiveness on the part of man is perceived within man's capabilities of realistically and objectively dealing with the facts, not just with abstract conceptions. The Islamic ideology is a realistic one that deals with the universe as a decisive proof of the existence of Allah. It also deals with life on the basis that it is a temporal experience full of good and evil. It ends with death and is a bridge to another everlasting life. Man, in the Islamic philosophy, is a sophisticated creature whom Allah created from earth and breathed into him from His own Soul.

Relationship between Theoritical Discourse and Reality:

In fact, discourse is justified by how it is applied in people's life and its ability to remain valid when put to the test. The Islamic discourse is directed to two different types of audience: the Muslim audience, who respond to the collective application of the doctrinal Islamic discourse and the non- Muslim audience who are concerned with the universal discourse because of two main reasons; the first is the universality of the Islamic discourse and the great benefit it accommodates for people.

The second is due to the great masses of Muslims in the West who, like other citizens there, enjoy the rights of citizenship. Indeed, we are confronted by a general fact namely, the validity of Islam for every time and place. In the light of this, many serious attempts aimed at the practical implementation of the teachings of Islam on the level of a comprehensive

state policy have been made; the Islamic teachings provide the comprehensive cultural agenda that covers all aspects of life.

Taking this into consideration, the Malaysian Prime Minister 'Abdullah Ahmad Badawî proposed a project for the renaissance of the Muslim nation in the light of the teachings of Islam, attempting to restore the role of the Islamic culture. He called it "Civilizational Islam".

It refers to a comprehensive cultural approach that aims at renovating Islam in the country and helping to drive the nation towards development, progress and mastery. The project aimed at presenting Islam, due to its cultural aspect, as a religion that covers all aspects of life: social, economic and political, not to mention satisfying the various needs of the soul, body and mind. It also tackles the individual and collective issues and provides a comprehensive and integrated methodology for putting the Islamic teachings into practice in a way that distinguishes it from other Islamic experiences, such as Sufism and Islamic political movements. [1]

Badawî described the project as "an attempt to return the Muslim nation to its real sources and give priority to the values and virtuous senses of Islam in order to guide our life and direct it to the best way." He defined the guidelines of his project with the following ten points:

1. Belief in Allah and Fearing Him

Belief in Allah is a key factor in realizing vicegerency and population of the earth, whereas piety and righteousness lead to good manners, noble relations and virtuous deeds. Indeed, the role of faith is not restricted to the purification of the soul, doctrine and worship, but it also addresses the behavior and work of man.

2. Honest and Sincere Government

A government should be formed through counsel and free choice. Its mission is to spread justice, prevent oppression, return rights to their owners and care for the interests of the people, regardless of race and with utmost honesty and sincerity.

3. Freedom and Independence of People

Freedom is one of the greatest values in human life. It represents the motive that drives one towards hard work and creativity. Also, it frees one from subordination and dependence.

(1) Muhammad Shirif Bashir, Civilizational Islam, the Malaysian Development Project, www.islamonline.net, 02/03/2005.

4. Having Full Command of Different Fields of Knowledge

In fact, knowledge is the corner stone of the renaissance of any nation and the means of populating and harnessing the earth and utilizing its resources.

5. Comprehensive and Balanced Economic Development:

It covers all fields of development; economics, sociology, politics, religion, culture and civilization. It is concerned with man as its focus and aim.

6. Improvement of the Quality of Life:

It refers to the safety, stability and availability of the essential requirements of life.

7. Keeping Rights of Minorities and Women:

This means observing rights of the ethnic and religious minorities, honoring women and enhancing the role of woman in the society.

8. Good Manners and Lofty Cultural Values:

This requires paying attention to the good manners and values in all walks of life and using them as the basis in the educational system.

9. Protection of the Environment:

This means to preserve the environment and protect it from the causes of pollution, diseases and damage.

10. Improving the Defensive Capabilities of the Nation:

The defensive capabilities are essential for the safety and integrity of the nation, the protection of the national interests of the citizens and maintaining independence and sovereignty of the nation.

He emphasizes that "Civilizational Islam can bring renaissance and progress to Muslims in the third millennium, and it possesses the economic potentials that help integrate Muslims in the modern global economy." It also "Has the best cure for extremism" as "it encourages tolerance, mutual understanding, moderation and peace." Islam aims at achieving the utmost benefits for all people, irrespective of their doctrines and races. It exhorts its followers to "treat non-Muslims with kindness and moderation." This project, it is contended, will lead the nation to mastery and superiority and it should be considered as a source of pride for Muslims and non-Muslims as well.

The project at hand, according to Badawi's conception, is based on ten basic factors that all Muslims, individuals and groups, should do their best to realize. They are:

1. Comprehensive Education which includes religious teachings and modern sciences, and covers the social and individual obligations as well as considering the pressing duties of the time.

2. Good Government which is able to administer and employ the uman and material resources well.

3. Development of Lifestyle. This refers to the advancement of the ways of life regarding modernization and culture.

4. Improving the Quality of Life, by providing people with the requirements of an honorable life in its best form.

5. Strong Personality which is represented by being sincere and honest. Sincerity is the basis of sound sayings and deeds whereas honesty is the pillar of the society and country. Without sincerity and honesty, we will not have a virtuous person and so will not have a virtuous society. These qualities represent the foundations of a culture.

6. Motivation and Activeness. A Muslim should be active and selfmotivated egarding the ever-changing dynamics of life as well as recognizing its requirements and related matters.

7. Comprehensiveness and Universality. The project is based on the comprehensive understanding of Islam which is a comprehensive way of life; it is dogma, worship, ethics, transactions, legislations and an educational system. It is a total regime that governs the nation in all its aspects of life and determines its methodology for the enhancement of human behavior in all respects and fifields.

8. Practicality and Reality. This is far away from abstract idealism. Islam is a realistic way of life. It recognizes the concreteness of life, the nature of man and the differences between people regarding their inclination, perception, needs and demands.

9. Independence and non-subordination to the other, regarding thought, culture, economy and politics.

10. Reinforcing the Role of Family, for the family is the basic unit of society. The betterment of the family leads to the unity, prosperity and welfare of the society.

In the end, this research proposes a feasible work plan that represents an objective standpoint for a more comprehensive and deeper dialogue through self-criticism, openness and correction.

From Isolation to Dialogue:

In earlier centuries, Islamic-Western relations were marked by tension that resulted in response to some historical events. This phase commenced with the Crusades and the ideological justification which gave ground for them. This phase was followed by the Western military campaigns and the economic exploitation of the resources of the Muslim nation. Today, it takes the form of directed and biased media which are utilized by some emigrant Muslim groups who use everything in order to protect their lives and positions in the West. They placed themselves in a confrontational situation with a new, deep-rooted Muslim generation which differs with these erroneous powers in both their doctrine and aim. The new Muslim generation considers Islam as the bearer of the message of goodness for all people without discrimination, whereas the aims of these powers are the product of looking for financial gains, regardless of how they are obtained and living in rigid and closed communities. This situation stimulated prejudgment and stereotypes so people in the West despised and condemned the Islamic way of life. Muslims in the West were pushed to take a defensive position. Their fear of the West was marked by being isolated, asserting total disparity between Islam and the Western culture. Apart from this complex negative situation, the West took certain unfavorable positions regarding many issues of national freedom, especially the Palestinian issue. This created among Muslims the belief that the West, with its materialism and atheism, harbors evil for Muslims and that it is a key player in the cause of all the problems facing Muslims. (1)

No one can deny the existence of a crisis between the two sides: the Muslims and the West, while the only beneficiary is another side. The cultural, social and historical values of Muslims and the West are undeniably very rich and well-established. They contain indications and primary preparedness for fruitful communication and rational dialogue on the basis of equality and positive cultural respect of the heritage of one another. This will not look strange if one takes into account that both Muslims and people in the West share a joint religious and cultural heritage.(2) In fact, the heritage of rationalism represents a common feature between the Islamic

(1) Râshid Al-Ghanûshî, Dialogues of Qusayy Sâlih Darwîsh, (London, Khalîl Media Service) p.150, 1992.
(2) See 'Falsehoods against Islam' by Muhammad Qutb (International Islamic Federation of Student Organizations) p. 169, 1985.

and European cultures. Ibn Rushd (Averroes), Ibn Sîna (Avicenna), Al-Khawârizmî and Ar-Râzî (Rhazes) were among the prominent scholars who reformulated the Greek heritage with their commentaries and they were objective in their researches; this put them among the forerunners and symbols of European renaissance and history. Muslims are not intruding emigrants who have no relation to the European culture. Rather, they have profound roots in the European history. They always played an important role in building modern Europe and developing its economy. Muslim soldiers lost their lives defending France against the German army when some French traitors, supported by some emigrant groups, conspired against France and its national security. This is the best evidence for our claim. (1)

So, the long-term rigid discourse does not rest on any historical, objective background nor any work for the common interest of the peoples. Rather, it represents a false image that was nourished by some malicious powers which inhibited all kinds of proximity and collaboration among the peoples. Despite their simple awareness of the situation, the first generation of emigrants, who were forced by poverty and the wrongful subjugation of colonialism to leave their land seeking work and financial stability, represented the simple but true image of Islam and showed love for all around them and refrained from the negative behavior and wrongdoings which Islam abhors.

This awareness, though weak, sowed seeds of productive knowledge, whose initial manifestations came to light with the movement of the new migration of students, intellectuals and educated workers who managed partly to change the common stereotype of workers' camps, which represented a new form of veiled humiliation. These camps are associated with concepts of forced labor, persecution and other forms of ill-treatment prompted by a bad idea that was firmly implanted in the mind of Western people and was related to colonial arrogance and the inclination to the logic of dominance and egoism that neglected all characteristics of modesty and equality.

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(1) 'Abdul-Wahhâb Al-Misîri is of the view that the new Islamic discourse revealed openness towards Western modernity and discussed it positively and creatively and he added that this may help develop critical awareness. In fact, if we know the other well, we will realize the wrong approach he has followed and the serious situation he is facing. As a result, our confidence in ourselves will be increased. Also, this creative, open-minded, critical situation will help us discover the creative capabilities within the Muslim culture. See 'Features of the New Islamic Discourse', www.islamonline.net on 21/03/2002.

The second phase of the relation between the Islamic world and the West, which went beyond the doubtful interaction to include the concept of citizenship, is related to the emergence of new Islamic institutions having many objectives: social, cultural, religious, commercial, etc., as well as other institutions that showed a serious desire to benefit their countries.

In fact, the great number of Muslims in the West prompts communication and dialogue between Islam and the West. Muslims in the West should have the sense of responsibility of serving their religion as well as their Western fellows. Islam commands its followers to be sincere to the countries in which they live, preserve the security and interests of the people and refrain from isolation, passivity and unjustified seclusion that serve the agenda of the enemies of peaceful coexistence and positive social participation.

The Prophet (PBUH) was sent as a mercy for mankind. The aim of the Prophet (PBUH) was not to remove all foundations of *Jâhiliyyah* (the Pre-Islamic Period of Ignorance). Rather, he (PBUH) said:

«Indeed, I have been sent to perfect manners.»

Thus, a Muslim should consider himself as a tool that completes the aspects of progress in the West which, undoubtedly, have precedence.[1]

Today, the Islamic presence in the West is not the mere presence of some emigrants; rather, it has become a question of citizenship. In other words, Islam has become a de facto presence, and we have to act to provide the guidance for Muslims' life so that they can lead a positive life in all respects and be free of suspected concepts that indicate ambiguous meanings and aims. These concepts and terminology seek to destabilize the position of Islam so that it is diverted away from positive interaction and from forming a basic constituent in the Western society. This ability to lead a positive life can be realized by acknowledging the fact that there is a difference between peoples and working to prepare individuals so that they can be active citizens in the society.

However, in order to insure the activity and continuity of the Islamic presence it should be based on a scientific, objective and effective methodology as well as a conscious and rational awareness. This methodology should raise the awareness of Muslims of the conditions of their life and facilitate their ways of life without falling into controversial

(1) Râshid Al-Ghanûshî, ibid., p. 154, with slight changes.

juristic difficulties that can interrupt the course of their life or open the door for ill-improvised judgments that lead to misunderstanding and wrong practices. In this case, these judgments will neither abide by religion nor reach the truth.

`Abdul-Majîd `Umar An-Najjâr, a contemporary Islamic thinker, presented a scientific scheme regarding the question of research on Islam in Europe. This scheme is a substantiated and developed work plan based on the fact that cultural interaction is so serious that it requires a new methodology to be a scientifically credible research. According to An-Najjâr, scientific research should be based on a comprehensive survey and a future vision along with facilitating effective ways to fulfill the required mission. This way, one can avoid poor judgments and provisional solutions. Scientific research, according to An-Najjâr, should be undertaken by collective institutions, including Futurology centers, analysis, surveillance and statistics institutes, and *Fatwa* and *Ijtihâd* centers. It should consider enlisting the aid of a *(Shurâ)* counsel, co-operation and joint work. Then, the management of work should be done using future-oriented thinking, proposing work plans and supervising and directing the results for the benefit of all.

The features of this project can be demonstarted by the following points:

- Scientific research derives its identity from its strong connection with the Islamic-European situation; that should have a scientific nature

with regards to its authority, methodology and subject, away from extremism, fanaticism, gullibility, superstition or everything that eradicates principles and violates flexibility and stability. It regards the authentic Islamic sources to be the ultimate authority and considers religious goals as the basis of thought and the welfare of the Islamic European presence as the aim. In this way, the positive integration of Islam and Muslims in Europe can occur by the construction of the universal human culture.

- Scientific research on Islamic European relations aims at providing an Islamic life for Muslims in terms of doctrine and *Sharî'ah* rulings. This way, Muslims can interact properly with the life of the European society and consequently, participate positively in the social and cultural development, basing their work on Islamic foundations and aiming for general human cooperation. All of this is attainable through a sound realization of the components of the European reality and different aspects of worship and dealings related to matters of the Muslim minorities. Thereupon, they may consciously participate and have a better future.

- Scientific research on the Muslims' presence in Europe should entail certain rules related to theoretical methodology, and others concerned with authority and identity, considering that the Islamic presence in Europe is not an isolated phenomenon but it constitutes an active element within an integrated system that goes back to the remote Islamic past, relates to the present time of Europe and looks to the future of a joint cultural interaction. In fact, this necessitates dismissing temporary solutions, individual and party-related visions and partial *Fatwas*, so focusing on great cultural issues and providing a better treatment for them according to the authentic Islamic perspective.

Meanwhile, the Islamic perspective observes the facts of modern science as well as the Islamic heritage and combines the scientific, human and cognitive background with Islamic rulings and values.

- Scientific research requires tremendous effort and diversified means as well as an inter-disciplinary approach of scientific specializations and collaborative efforts. We do not undervalue the importance of individual research with regard to deep analysis. But collective participation in the case of researching the European- Islamic relations is very important. Collective participation in this respect entails a thorough understanding of religious matters as well as a close awareness of the Western culture, language and methodology. Collective participation determines priorities and presents perfect visions that are able to handle the issues concerned and direct efforts towards them in order to present the most effective outcome in the Islamic European issue and to reach the desired goals. Indeed, various intellectual, physical and fifinancial efforts should be brought together in order to realize welfare and good for all the people. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***And We have not sent you except as a giver of glad tidings and a Warner to all mankind.***﴾ [Saba' (Sheba):28]

The mature Islamic mentality has the ability to manage texts and reach an understanding, deduction and application of rulings in the service of the nation and in consideration of the reality which we have to deal with, without negligence or undue concessions. The true Muslim spares no effort in spreading the message of Islam through dialogue and reason. In fact, Muslims consider that religion revives the souls, for it is a comman denominator in all previous divine messages and the message of Islam is the seal of all the messages. Muslims acknowledge and consider all virtuous

values, customs and traditions as a shared heritage for every culture. These concepts were clearly stated by Hasan 'Abdullah At-Turâbî, a renowned Islamic thinker, who presented a full conception about the principle of dialogue with others and the joint pursuit of goodness as well as probing other subjects such as the dialogue of cultures, and Islam and the West. At-Turâbî proposed a strategic plan for dialogue based on the following characteristics:

First: Dialogue and its Justifications:

Dialogue is a pressing legal necessity for spreading the message of Islam and undertaking the trust of the *Da'wah*, and a practical necessity imposed by the global reality with regard to communication and interaction between nations, countries, groups and movements. This requires understanding 'the other' and his reality and knowing the facts about 'the other' in order to deal with them. Indeed, the future of the Muslim nation demands us to consider certain realities that take account of human experiences in its relation to Islamic teachings and provide the perfect model of understanding the purposes of the *Sharî'ah* and the representation of real religious commitment.

Second: Dialogue and Nature of Relations

This refers to the theoretical, international as well as practical relations with their different forms, stages and models.

Third: Issues of Dialogue

They include the cultural discourse, the political-economic dialogue and the social media discourse with all its forms and details.

Fourth: Means of Dialogue

This can be realized through creating the practical and scientific models which serve to provide the good example. In addition, there should be proper direction and different means of discourse and mobilization of all participants of communication in order to conduct a comprehensive dialogue that covers the fields of research, such as trade, politics, sports, arts and scientific, cultural and economic exchange. Moreover, Islamic centers and mosques must be built in order to spread the Islamic doctrine and culture in the West and coordinate initiatives to diversify the mediums of communication and publication, insuring a continuous presence in the Western media, as well as holding conferences and courses to learn Arabic and spread the Islamic faith and culture.

Fifth: Procedures of Dialogue

The urgency of holding Western Islamic discourse stems from the rightful understanding of the religious texts, which call for open-mindedness in order to be beneficial for Islam in general. The Muslim nation is commanded to spread the message of Islam. In this course, many academic, cultural and general attempts have been made in the West, on the individual and collective levels, aiming at raising people's awareness of the cultural and historical contribution of Islam, and Muslims awareness to the cultural development of the West. The goal is one of two points:

a- To unfold the true face of Islam, its doctrine and its contributions to human values in the world.

b- Promoting researches that aim at illustrating the importance of the contributions of non-Western cultures to human culture in addition to making room for dialogue between educated people who value religion and culture and recognize the importance and future of common coexistence.

- Points Needed to Build Confidence

Objective cultural dialogue should be based on clear principles of equality, respecting the distinctive qualities of the other and appreciating its role in building a multi-cultural, multi-religious and multi-lingual society. It must eliminate the remains of the dark history which was dominated by the shadow of the Crusades and the Inquisition courts. This can be fulfilled only through acknowledging the historical injustice done to Muslims and offering them an apology. We should not forget that Muslims brought many aspects of Eastern culture to Europe along with Islamic teachings, actively participating and realizing the conditions of positive citizenship. In all this, Muslims are guided by the principles of Islam, which call for development and beneficence and prohibit all aspects of spreading corruption on earth.[1]

In fact, the historical injustice committed by the West, and specially France, against Muslim citizens and emigrants, took the form of the Western countries not treating Muslims as fully integrated citizens in the community. They dealt with Muslims according to the community's temporary needs.

(1) 'Abdul-Majîd 'Umar An-Najjâr, Review Environment and its Issues from an Islamic Perspective, chapter on the Islamic Conception of the Significance of the Environment, edition of Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs , p. 81, 1999 .

There, Muslims were left on the margin, with very poor conditions concerning education, housing, social services and complicated administrative procedures, not to mention the increase in the spirit of aggressive racial discrimination among the opponents of emigration.

However, the points needed to build confidence between the two sides require the following steps:

- Rrecognition by the West that they were unjust against the Muslims as they neglected their rights as well as the West taking measures to exonerate them of all the accusations and defificiencies that were intentionally attributed to them.

- Abstention of excluding Muslims from the focus of, and refraining from dealing with them on the basis of marginalization and racialism. Instead, they should be regarded as an active component of the Western society due to the cultural heritage they have and the inherent incentives of goodness and reform they possess. These incentives enable them to participate positively in all human activities in general and provide a good example for other Muslims to motivate them to adhere to their religion and realize its potential in the lives of the people as Allah willed this by the message of His Prophet (PBUH), the mercy for all mankind.

- Reviewing all educational syllabuses in all the educational stages and freeing them from concepts and insinuations of racialism and prejudice. In addition, the development of programs related to the culture and history of Islam should be entrusted to Muslims who are known for their thorough knowledge, scientific credibility, impartiality and sound religiousness.

- Availability of means of media and other means of mass communication before Muslims so that they can convey the message of Islam to all people, elaborate on the guidelines of their religion for their children and guide them to the right way using good advice and education. In addition, all kinds of discrimination between classes of people or disparagement of Islam must be eliminated and the guilt of showing contempt for Islam should be regarded as a punishable crime so that it becomes a deterrent against any one who wants to defame history and religion. Any unjustified criticism against Islam should be criminalized as harshly as the crime of anti-Semitism, which is taken as a pretext to punish whoever criticizes the racial and inhuman oppression of people in the name of religion and their so-called historical divine right.

- Personal whims, biased considerations and antagonistic dispositions and concepts directed against the religion of Islam should be eliminated. Islam should not be judged according to the mistaken and irresponsible acts of some Muslims, considering these acts as evidence for refusing and isolating Muslims, since the history of a whole nation cannot be represented by and should not be reduced to the behavior of one group. However, to err is human, be he a person or a group. All people, save the prophets, are liable to make mistakes. Whereas the final word is left to ideological and scientific evidence to determine what is suitable and better for society, its members and institutions.

- Muslims, as well as their distinguished doctrine, rites, places of worship and clothes, represent a social entity that should be accepted and acknowledged and they should not be the victims of oppression. On the other hand, there are hateful powers that are motivated by the drive of revenge and exclusion of Muslims under the slogans of secularism, social values and the principles of the state. The best evidence for this is the famous French law "Religious Symbols", which actually aimed at controlling the phenomenon of religiousness among Muslim youth in France, especially the fifirst and second generations, and stripping them of their religious identity. No government offifficials or politicians dared probe any issue related to the Jewish community in France, as this would be met with charges of anti-Semitism.

Real dialogue must be based on openness, objectivity and adherence to the values of justice, impartiality and other general human values which have been preached by the divine messages before the unfair international laws. These laws are open to twisted interpretations that jeopardize the goals of these values and inflict destruction upon innocent people. [1] Today, Muslims are in a dire need to reread and familiarize others with the essence of the articles of the *Wathîqat Al-Madînah* (the Pact of Medina) and should know the rights of minorities in the Muslim state, including religious, cultural, historical, social and political rights. It guaranteed 'the other' the right of an honorable and positive life without any kind of exclusion or discrimination. Islam considered the enforcement of these principles as a religious obligation with the outcome of whoever violates the covenant of

(1) See 'Abdul-Majîd 'Umar An-Najjâr, The Cultural Horizons of the Islamic Presence in the West, first edition, p. 101, 2005.

Allah and His Messenger (PBUH) never smelling the fragrance of Paradise. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«...*He has broken Allah's Covenant, so he will never smell the fragrance of Paradise.*»[1]

He (PBUH) also said:

«*I enjoin you to fulfill Allah's Covenant (made with the Dhimmîs) as it is the covenant of your Prophet and the source of the livelihood of your dependents (i.e., the taxes taken from the Dhimmîs).*»[2]

Moreover, Allah, the Al-Mighty, made justice obligatory saying:

﴿***O you who have believed, persistently stand firm for Allah, as witnesses being just, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Acquainted with what you do.***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 8]

Accordingly, the issue of cultural dialogue is a vital prerequisite necessitated by religion and imposed by reality due to its relation to mutual coexistence between two groups of people in general and with regard to the existence of Muslims in the West in particular. Indeed, the Muslims' presence in the West is hoped to yield its fruits in the long and short terms and give a meaning to diversity and multiplicity in society, which will reflect the richness of its fabric, the renovation of its spirit of action and its benevolence to all people alike. In this way, the unjust exclusion and detachment of relations will disappear and members of society shall be evaluated on the basis of equality and shared benefits, provided that they comply with the principles of productive awareness. This, in turn, requires Muslims to seriously undertake this responsibility and exert every effort to rationalize their participation in order to make their life meaningful and useful. Life is an experience of positive interaction, fair competition and participation. Preference in this life is given to virtuous people, regardless of their color or race. There can be no doubt that cultural interaction and rapprochement in society is a prime necessity and is promoted by both religion and reality.

(1) Narrated by At-Tirmidhî, Kitâb Ad-Diyyât (Book of Blood Money), who said it is a *Hasan* (Approved), *Sahîh* (Authentic) *Hadîth*.

(2) Narrated by Al-Bukhârî, Kitâb Al-Jizyah and Al-Muwâd'ah (Book of Blood Money and Truce).

Towards a Rational Islamic Discourse
Conditions of Renovation

Talking about a new vision of 'the contemporary Islamic discourse' and reviewing its requisites call for more investigation of the preliminary theoretical issues we discussed earlier and utilizing them as principal bases for Muslims to adopt and follow. Muslims' acts should be based on these firm doctrinal principles so that their complete loyalty will be to the religion. Without this, we cannot conceive any features of Islamic discourse. Islamic discourse contains the general foundations of religion and addresses all people, Muslims and non-Muslims alike, including those who share with us the great principles of faith, even if we differ with them in some details.

Therefore, we should observe the difference of people's awareness, perspectives and needs and accordingly determine the ways of discussing with them, though the essence of the discourse is one and the same. This essence incorporates the goals and wisdom of the religion. This is what we mean by the renovation of the Islamic discourse; namely the renovation of the methodology, determination of priorities and specification of subjects and factors. In other words, it is the nature of this religion to which we want to invite people and to make every effort to present its true image to people, away from all superficiality, superstition and opportunism.

Islamic institutions, in the West in general and in Europe in particular, including mosques, non-governmental societies, intellectual forums, youth and women's unions, schools for teaching Arabic and Islam and academic institutions, Internet, newspapers, periodicals and journals, should be dedicated to the mission of promoting a new, enlightened Islamic discourse in these countries. This discourse is to enhance faith in the hearts of the believers, address others and converse with them on a basis of a common ideology,[1] refute the deceptions of the deviants, preach Islam among non-Muslims in accordance with the guidelines of the Islamic *Da'wah* and explain to 'the other' the principles of our religion. No doubt this needs great effort and careful planning in order to renovate the Islamic and religious discourse using the following outlines:

(1) See our book 'The Substantiation of Religious Dialogue', the discussion of its legality.

First: Defining the New Dimensions of the Responsibilities of the *Imâm*

The mission of the *Imâm* is no longer restricted to leading Muslims in prayer, preparing the deceased for burial and conciliation between disputants, which people used to think of until the very near past. Rather, the mission of the *Imâm* has acquired new and important dimensions.

The *Imâm* disseminates the message of Allah, the Lord of the Worlds; he is an advisor and guide; he formulates the methodology and content of the *Da'wah* and provides the ideal model of the true Muslim, with regard to adhering to the manners and beliefs of Islam.

So the *Imâm* should possess the required knowledge that prepares him to carry out the task of the imamate with its great responsibilities in conformity with reality, which has no room for individual *Ijtihâd* (legal reasoning and discretion) or inefficient evaluation. The *Imâm* leads people in prayer, refines their personal conduct and advises them. He represents Islam and its features as a civilization in the Western circles. As to the old task of the *Imâm*, which lasted for a long period and fulfilled its mission in that time, it is not appropriate for the new and different reality. It now stands accused of being superficial and primitive, not on the ground of its falsity, but because it does not fulfill the requirements of modern discourse concerning mechanism, methodology and ways of conveying the message of Islam.

The teachings of Islam are immutable and original and are not prone to alternation, abrogation or distortion.

Second: Defining the Identity of Modern Islamic Discourse and its Authority

The Islamic discourse should be distinguished from other patterns of discourse in general, even from other distorted forms of Islamic discourse. The true Islamic discourse has its authority, criteria and purposes. It adheres firmly to the principles of the doctrine, proves to man the value of the honor bestowed to him by Allah and respects the value of the mind that Allah made the basis of religious obligations and the cause of human responsibility. It combines both theoretical and universal visions, regards revelation as the standard criterion and the absolute, complete reality and deems the universe as a clear manifestation of Allah's Omnipotence that directs man to contemplate and understand the laws of nature and life.

Third: Determining the Constituents of Modern Islamic Discourse:

1. Rational and Scientific Thinking

This is obtainable by liberation of the mind and giving it an pportunity to use its faculties so that it can understand reality and identify its challenges and problems as well as to be aware of different tools and means. In doing so, Muslims would possess the necessary elements of a cultural presence, cope with scientific progress, achieve political and social stability and possess the means of their sustenance. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***And these similitudes We put forward for mankind; but none will understand them except those who have knowledge.***﴾ [Al-'Ankabût (The Spider): 43]

2. Linguistic Communication

Arabic as a language represents the cultural wellhead of the Islamic nation. The Glorious Qur'ân was revealed in Arabic. Yet, this does not close the door on mastering and employing other languages in the service of the Islamic discourse. The Islamic nation is required to invite all people to Islam in their different languages. In the past, the Muslim land expanded and incorporated nations with diverse customs, traditions, languages and dialectics. However, this did not prevent Muslims from conveying the message of Islam and elucidating its principles to those nations as the number of non-Arab Muslims became very large. Malaysia and Indonesia are the best example.

Today, Islamic preachers in Europe should master the language of the countries they live in so that they can gain success in the mission with which Allah charged them. Truly, the better way of *Da'wah* is to address everyone in their own languages so that they can understand the content of the discourse and interact positively with it. Furthermore, the field of *Da'wah* is very wide to the extent that it includes many intellectual, cultural, technical, sports and creative activities beside the direct methods of preaching Islam. We should share these activities with those whom we call to Islam. This way, they can realize Islam practically before they learn it theoretically. This is the core goal of the religion of Islam. When 'Â'ishah (may Allah be pleased with her) described the Prophet (PBUH) she said: «*His (the Prophet's) good manners were (an embodiment of) the Qur'ân.*»

Islam was spread peacefully in Asian countries by Muslim merchants who invited people to Islam through their noble manners and straight behavior, such characteristics being clear in their personal conduct.

3. Cultural Interaction and Open-Mindedness

Muslims should interact with people around them in all aspects of life and should not exclude themselves from society. This is to be able to exchange experiences and knowledge with people. At the same time, the Muslim should present to people the past and modern Islamic culture without any underestimation of the other and his culture. The long Islamic history, with its momentous events and great incidents, never tells us that Islam decided at anytime to destroy the civilization of any country which Muslims entered; rather, Islam tried to Islamize the newly-conquered lands and turn them to active and productive centers.(1) The more Muslim preachers understand the Islamic culture and the greater their ability to demonstrate ideas and opinions that assert the significant Islamic cultural contribution in different fields, the more they gain success. European cultural centers are very much aware of many aspects of Islamic civilization, so we should spare no effort to expand their knowledge about the details and particularities of the Islamic culture which massively contributed to the Islamic collective experience.

4. Using Dialogue and Respecting the other

Objective, purposeful dialogue represents one of the most prominent features of Islam. The Glorious Qur'ân uses dialogue as a technique to call towards the right way of life, considering this to be the best way to reach conviction and a voluntary acceptance of Islam by 'the other', without coercion. In doing so, Islam laid down the following foundations:

a- Observing truthfulness and avoiding falsehood, sophistry and whims. An example of this is the conversation between Mûsâ (Moses) (PBUH) and Pharaoh. (2)

b- Using objectivity as the way to reach facts and realize satisfactory results. The example of this is the conversation between Nûh (Noah) (PBUH) and his people.

c- Adhering to a perfect proof and line of argument as well as sound logic, such as the dialogue between Ibrâhîm (Abraham) (PBUH) and An- Namrûd Ibn Kan'ân (Nimrod).

d- Aiming only at illustrating the right opinion on any issue.

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(1) Muhammad Ghallâb, Islam and Its Fundamental Principles, (Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs) pp. 58-59, 1963.

(2) Sura of Tâ-Hâ, verses: 42-54.

e- Realizing modesty and avoiding defamation, false accusations and provocation.

f- Making room for an open dialogue and exchange of opinions, giving the opponent the opportunity to freely express his views. (1)

In addition to these moral restrictions, there are other objective principles that the people engaged in dialogue should abide by:

a- Sound understanding of the other.

b- Wide awareness of religion so that Muslims can convey the message of Islam to the other in a convincing way.

c- Firm belief in the agreed-upon values, which help one not to be isolated and inspire him to have close relations with others.

d- Practical application of the religion, for the aim of religion is not restricted to belief in abstract knowledge but it includes application and practice. (2)

5. Manifestation of the Moderation of Islam

This refers to the fairness of the rulings of Islam, represented in its principles and values and in the impartiality, which should be the standard that differentiates good from evil and right from wrong. Indeed, this moderation is the characteristic which qualifies Muslims to be witnesses (i.e. judging justly) amongst the people. (3) Therefore, no one disagrees on the fact that the modern Islamic discourse should include the concepts which illustrate the moderation of Islam. These include:

- balancing between both soul and body;
- acknowledging the reality of mankind;
- keeping in conformity with human nature and the refifinement of its desires;
- showing simplicity of the doctrines and flexibility of obligations;
- and determining the social position of both men and women. (4)

(1) See Muhammad Sayyid Tantâwî, Etiquette of Dialogue in Islam, pp. 16-31, Dâr An-Nahdah, 1997.

(2) See A Dialogue of Religions, William Sulayman, (Cairo, General Egyptian Book Organization,) pp. 16-31, 1997.

(3) Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143.

(4) Sa'îd Murâd, Modern Islamic Discourse and Its Components, a research included in the book of Islam and the Development of Religious Discourse issued by the Association of Islamic Universities within the series of The Thought of Confrontation (3), first edition, p.42 and the following pages, 2002.

Fourth: Islam and Cultural Interaction:

The discourse of the Qur'ân in general reminds people of the origin of their creation, urges them to have social contact and emphasizes righteousness as the criterion of preference. In consequence, the causes of class and social standards and pressures will be eliminated. The Qur'ân asserts that the principle of interaction is the noblest manner which people should adhere to regardless of their origins, approaches and beliefs. This is what we call 'Cultural Interaction', which indicates that interaction and communication between people should be for legitimate inter-dependence that, in turn, will represent the basis of a sound human community, and recognize the rich diversity that contribute to the process of conscious and objective cultural social contact. Islam, with its noble principles and exalted purposes, comprehends this constitutional diversity and creates positive factors which support the construction of society and the institutions of the country which promote the richness of experience and the variety of resources. The early history of the Islamic community in Medina, with its religious, tribal, language and racial communities, represents the best example of this. The Muslim state did not marginalize or exclude those groups; rather, it brought them into harmony under a binding covenant and established certain principles that helped regulate their relations and made the protection of these principles an individual duty upon every member of the society. This is the message of Islam to its followers from among the Western people: they should dedicate their activities in life to the service of these noble purposes.

Fifth: Relation with Non-Muslims

The relation between Muslims and non-Muslims is based on justice, peace and mutual cooperation. They share common values of fraternity and principles of national loyalty, which is substantiated by Islam. Indeed, Islam not only urges its followers to revere and respect the other but also to exert their utmost effort in order to reach the highest degree of good and justice. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿Allah does not forbid you to deal justly and kindly with those who fought not against you on account of religion and did not drive you out of your homes. Verily, Allah loves those who deal with equity. It is only as regards those who fought against you on account of religion, and have driven you out of your homes, and helped to drive you out, that Allah forbids you to befriend them. And whosoever will befriend them, then such are the wrong-doers.﴾ [Al-Mumtahanah (The Woman Tested): 8-9]

The Qur'ân forbids one to befriend the aggressor who makes conspiracies against Muslims and wants to do harm to them. Moreover, it directs Muslims to seek justice and to shun oppression. For, the human ego inclines to excessive revenge when under oppression. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿...***And let not the enmity and hatred of others make you avoid justice. Be just: that is nearer to piety.***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 9]

Sixth: Enforcing the Role of Muslim Women

Women have a crucial and key role in society. The role of women in life is so great, since life in all its aspects is a partnership between man and woman. Among the female Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) were teachers, nurses and even warriors. They participated competently and positively in all activities. Women's participation in the different fields of life was not under debate; they used to play their natural role in life as a vicegerent of Allah on earth and fulfill the responsibility of propagating the Islamic message.

Due to the inactiveness which has paralyzed the role of women in modern times, efforts of zealous Islamic scholars should be directed towards changing this negative type of Muslim women. Unfortunately, this image has been clung to Muslim women for many centuries so that it seems as if it is one of the moral principles that must be adhered to, any change in this image being considered a contradiction of the Islamic cognitive structure. Meanwhile, many of the supporters of this erroneous conception directly benefit from the situation and, consequently, they exaggerate in placing restrictions on the freedom of women and their role in the construction and development of society. They do this to avoid the delusions into which Western women have fallen, which has led them to become a cheap commodity in the fields of advertisement and commercial promotion.

However, to confront the challenges of *Da'wah* and disseminating the merits of Islam and its benefits, Muslim women should begin a new course of work in which they would significantly contribute to the education of Muslim women and familiarize them with the importance of their role.

This can be carried out in clubs, work places, public venues, parks or any other place where women can be found. In doing so, Muslim women can revitalize their powers and replace the state of passivity and degeneracy with the task of educating the members of society and taking care of their individual and collective manners. Thus, they would employ the power of femininity in the right way, away from depravity and humiliation.

Moreover, the culture of inactiveness and the traditional invalid rulings, which were spread for centuries to the extent that they claimed that even the appearance of women is *'Awrah* (something that must be veiled and secluded) and that the best place for the woman is the farthest place in her house, should be removed.

As a result of the continuous hesitation with regard to the explanation of the role of women and giving them an opportunity to positively participate in the community, in line with the teachings of Islam, new foreign voices began to rise, calling for the liberation of women and freeing them from ignorance, with which they label Islam, its doctrines and *Sharī'ah*. It was better for Muslim scholars to get rid of the negative social traditions which had accumulated and been aggravated in their societies. Moreover, they should adhere to their established intellectual heritage and reshape their vision in the light of its teachings.

Thus, women will become more entitled to express any mature views as well as positively participate and carry out productive work so much so that those who had wrongfully utilized the slogans of women liberation, while at the same time using women's bodies for advertising their goods, will be silenced.

Seventh: Reconsidering Educational Discourse:

Firstly, we want to refer to a postulate that the educational process constitutes a set of executive procedures which aim at equipping the person with certain characteristics. This is a premise that should be taken for granted. In this sense, the educational process must rely on a collective conception that includes and determines these specifications as well as the aim of building the person and mapping the way to transfer these specifications from the level of conception to a practical state. This procedure creates a person who enjoys these specifications which are the results of the educational process.

It is worth mentioning here that there is a real crisis on the level of the Islamic educational discourse, which is represented by the negligence of issues and problems of the reality of education. This raises concern to remove this negative condition. However, the more the Islamic educational discourse is concerned with contemporary and future educational matters, the more it gains legality and becomes a valid representation of the Islamic standards. Consequently, it will capture the hearts and identify the shortcomings and deficiencies, and as a result it will then be adopted by the Muslim majority. The mere recognition of the past and history is not enough to provide the diagnosis of the problem and its solution as much as

it adds to the problem by calling for adherence to the past without benefiting from it. So, the past will become the prison of ideas and desires for development.

The educational horizons to which the people in the past had reached do not provide solutions to the challenges of reality simply because reality is the momentous outcome of its environment and the fruit of certain experiences. We should make use of them as methodologies of thought and cognitive construction, but we cannot apply them literally to our reality. Ibn Taymiyyah and other reformists (may Allah confer mercy upon them) fought the culture of imitation and irrational copying of educational systems. His opinions refuted the allegations of many traditionalists who separated religious education from worldly education. They did not treat life seriously, but they paved the way for imitation and distorted simulation. Therefore, Ibn Taymiyyah is considered the actual founder of the Islamization of knowledge, treating scientific facts and life in general from an authentic Islamic perspective.

With this methodology, Ibn Taymiyyah aimed at founding the core of cognitive education through his encyclopedic writings in which he presented conclusive answers to a number of central problems in Islamic thought, especially concerning the relation between reason and revelation in his encyclopedic book *(Dar' Ta'ârud Al 'Aql wa An-Naql)* (Elimination of the Contradiction between Reason and Revelation) and points about Islamic concepts regarding establishing the facts of doctrine in his standard book *(Al-Jawâb As-Sahîh Liman Baddal Dîn Al-Masîh)* (The Straight Answer for Those Who Altered the Religion of the Messiah). In this book, Ibn Taymiyyah sought to achieve a set of educational purposes that serve as behavioral codes, contributing to every attempt for social reform without any detriment to the Muslim ruler who unsuccessfully tried to constrict the enlightening thought Ibn Taymiyyah was spreading. However, this cost him his life and he died in the prison of Al-Qal'ah (the Castle) in Damascus. His work had three dimensions:

- Raising the awareness of the elite through the discussion of standard writings and scientific seminars which provided old and new knowledge.
- Defining the role of the elite in a society where blind imitation dominated and was adopted by those who were allied with the ruler.
- Accurately illustrating the role of the Muslim individuals and preachers.

In spite of the long time that has passed, the determining principles of *Ijtihâd* that Ibn Taymiyyah laid down still have the power to cope with new kinds of information. This is because the cognitive horizons of these principles were not related to time or limited by imitation; rather they were

connected to theoretical principles and the authority of revelation. Therefore, they became more liable to be renewed and be consistent with the dynamics of the present time, which is what we mean by the term 'Modern Islamic Educational Discourse'.

Eighth: Reviving Self-education:

Self-education is an educational system in which the learner is given the opportunity to participate in some or all aspects of the educational process in accordance with available potentials and standards of development in the learning process. In self-education the learner depends on himself in the first place and can utilize educational alternatives and the available educational technologies under the supervision and direction of his tutor. The learner bears the results of his choices. He evaluates and corrects himself by himself in order to reach the desired behavioral objectives.[1]

Islamic experience is very rich in the field of self-made personal formation. Indeed, Muslims are ordered to take matters seriously and exert every effort to build and nourish their knowledge in accordance with an integrated and coordinated methodology that combines both diversification and subject order, moving from the easy subjects to the difficult ones, and from the primary principles to the encyclopedic studies and benefiting from all educational methods. A Muslim can use this approach in a way that facilitates for him the ways of learning and understanding, especially in the present time where means of communication and the spread of knowledge and information with all its civil and religious aspects have increased.

To reach this we should choose the authorized references correctly so that the learner will not fall into a kind of confusion which jeopardizes the objectives of education. Seeking consultation and sound direction is also important for grasping the truth and keeping away from falsehoods and avoiding equivocal symbols and abstract theological research. Selfeducation is an educational process through which the learner aims at studying knowledge using the available methods in the absence of a systematic school education, truly or practically. It is a choice that is taken when one wants to acquire knowledge and develop his personal culture.

Among those who wrote about self-education is Burhân Al-Islam Az-Zarnûgî or Burhân Ad-Dîn Az-Zarnûgî who composed a valuable book, "*Ta'lîm Al-Muta'allim Tarîq At-Ta'lîm*" (Informing the Learner of the Way

(1) The Vision of the University of Suez Canal regarding the Contemporary Islamic Educational Discourse, within the book of Islam and Development of Religious Discourse, prepared by a group of professors, p. 171.

of Education) or "*Ta'lîm Al-Muta'allim fi Tarîq At-Ta'lîm*" (Teaching the Learner about the Way of Education). He lived in the second half of the sixth century and the beginning of the seventh century A.H. in Khurasan.

Ninth: Directing the Work of Islamic Thought and *Da'wah* Institutions:

In fact, these institutions have a serious responsibility regarding Islamic awareness, especially in Europe which suffers from a lack of Islamic guidance and qualified Islamic institutions in addition to the large number of groups in the field of Islamic *Da'wah* that are not guided by the right teachings of Islam. Therefore, there should be a sufficient number of directed institutions that undertake the responsibility of Islamic *Da'wah* under the guidance of knowledgeable, honest and sincere scholars who can provide the right direction for the progress of Islamic *Da'wah*. This cannot be obtained except through the enforcement of the role of these institutions and putting practical and objective work plans implemented by the people of knowledge so that they can avoid confusion and improvised policies. These plans should aim at the realization of harmony between qualified preachers and the audience. By doing so, knowledge and material capacities will be united so that the foundations of successful work, that include utilizing some distinguished Islamic powers, will be established.

This will help in ensuring that efforts will not disperse between personal needs and the requirements of *Da'wah*.

Among the prominent conditions needed regarding the direction of institutions is to keep them away from illusionary conflicts and narrowminded organizational issues, which have interrupted the way of progress, led to the wrongful exclusion of many effective powers as well as frustrated many unqualified scholars and preachers due to their loyalty to certain parties. The scholarly Muslim group should adhere to conciliation, rapprochement and concentration of all active forces as well as preparing all ways of utilizing them. The standards that should be adopted are knowledge, sincerity and the fear of Allah. Thus, the inherited customs, which were brought along with the earliest generations or other deviant environments, will be put aside.

Tenth: Development and Enforcement of the Islamic Media:

The mass media possess great importance due to their ability to reach all people in all places. They have the capacity to direct people and form their interests. Their problem lies in being placed in the hands of dishonest people, as is the case today. However, this does not mean the insufficiency of Islamic media, despite their naiveté which is caused by incompetence, inexperience and lack of material capabilities. Thus, the development of

Islamic media, so that they can respond to the challenges of reality, is very important in order to concentrate the efforts of enlightenment. The local media should be focused on problems of Muslims in the West whereas other channels should include many active and beneficial programs. One of the conditions of development is that this should be undertaken by specialists and the media material should be relevant to the problems of Muslims.

Eleventh: Directing Islamic Books and Freeing their Content from Aimless Imitation and Futility:

Unnecessary repetition and imitation dominate the Islamic books and they lack the serious discussion of subjects that address the reality of the Muslims, except for a few productions. As a result of ignorance along with the unqualified persons who occupy the leading positions of management and guidance, the culture of jugglery and sorcery prevails over books of Islamic creed, *Fiqh*, etc. Subsequently, the mission of writing and publication of books has turned into a purely commercial business. To overcome the state of stagnation and deviation, those who undertake the responsibility of spreading the Islamic message should concentrate on providing alternative Islamic books on elected subjects, producing competitive publications and distributions as well as guiding the distributors towards the ways that contribute to the movement of Islamic awareness in all its dimensions and provide the best outcome for them. (1)

Twelfth: Establishing a Comprehensive and Independent Cultural Dictionary:

The modern Islamic discourse has realized that the vocabularies of the Western dictionary are not restricted to their linguistic meaning but they also have a cultural significance. So, one finds that words such as 'progress' have certain conceptions within a cultural context which determine their content and meaning. Similarly, the term 'reason' in its cultural context is connected with an intellectual heritage which resulted from the conflict between the church and knowledge and which bears a different meaning from its counterpart in Islamic knowledge. This work should not be done on an individual level but should be adopted by scientific institutions which work for cognitive authenticity and invention. However, many serious individual attempts have been made and can be regarded as the basis of a long-term academic work.

All the praise and thanks be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, Jinn and all that exists.

(1) For more information, review my book, Islamic Discourse and Its Theoretical Principles and Conditions of Innovation.

Crippled Contemporary Islamic Discourse

Dr. Ahmad 'Îsâwî(*)

This is a critical, analytical and historical study that sets some principles of the indepth overview of the Islamic discourse, illustrates its factors of success as well as those of inefficiency and, accordingly, determines ways of hope and suggests types of fruitful work which are necessary to find solutions.

Introduction:

The Term *Al-Khitâb* (Discourse)

The Arabic term *"Al-Khitâb"* (discourse) has been widely used by Arab Muslim academics and intellectuals in the political, cultural, religious, literary as well as intellectual literature, especially during the last three decades. It is noticeable that most intellectual, cultural and literary writings deal with this term, although it is a Qur'anic term mentioned in the Qur'ân with various meanings, forms and purposes.

(*)Professor of Da'wah, Information and Contemporary Islamic Thought, Batna University, (Algeria).

Also, this term has been mentioned widely, especially in the books of *Usûl Al-Fiqh* (Principles of Islamic Jurisprudence) when scholars define the *Hukm* (legal ruling) concerning the discourse for legally accountable persons, either the Divine discourse or a man-made one.

Nowadays, the contemporary Arab and Muslim elites use it intensively in the academic, scientific and cultural literature as a result of their being influenced by foreign literature or due to the revival of Qur'anic terms and restoring them into the field of the Arabic Islamic Discourse.

This term, regardless of its gaining currency because of the revival or intellectual influence or because of both of them, has to be linguistically reformulated and religiously revived so as to become a means of methodological scientific objectivity.

The Linguistic Meaning of Discourse

Discourse means:

1. A verbal expression in speech or writing.
2. Verbal exchange.
3. A formal, lengthy discussion of a subject, either written or spoken.

In this sense, the term discourse has various meanings:

1. A set of linguistic, symbolic, indicative and voice messages sent by a sender to a recipient. Such a sender may be a person, organization or an institution, while the recipient might be individuals, nations, groups or communities.

2. A complex cultural, social and symbolic direct or indirect system of communication between two parties.

The Technical Definition of Discourse

Discourse can be defined as the accurate and complex cognitive structure governed by a group of intellectual, cultural, literary, linguistic and historical disciplines. It is issued by some institution or individual to another in order to achieve certain goals by using different symbols and methods.

Thus, the components of discourse are determined by the main structure of the idea and the intended meaning. Hence, they may be cognitive, scientific, philosophical, religious etc. Besides, they are controlled according to a harmonious group of regulations and postulates known to a certain category of people. The sender of the discourse makes every effort, depending on the nature of the goals intended to be achieved, to convey the message to the recipient. The different symbols (numeric,

linguistic, voiced, pantomimic, illustrative, educational, political, historical, ideological, etc.) serve as the effective communicating factors between the two bodies.

The Technical Definition of Islamic Discourse:

We can conceive the concept of the Islamic discourse in relation to the eternal and sacred Islamic values derived from the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah*, as well as time, place, entities and opportunities. In this sense, the discourse varies according to different times. For example, there are kinds of discourse such as the contemporary, modern, historical Islamic discourse etc. Likewise, the discourse varies according to different places. That is, there are local, regional, international Islamic discourses, etc. Also, it varies according to the different methods, symbols used, goals and recipients. After all, Islamic discourse includes three prominent pillars:

1. The eternal and sacred pillar represented by the Glorious Qur'ân and the Noble *Sunnah*.

2. The *Salafî* (early righteous Muslims) approach represented by the heritage of the *Salaf*, starting from the era of the Companions of the Prophet (PBUH) and their Followers, and those that came after them. This is illustrated in the following *Hadîth*:

"The best people are those living in my generation, then those coming after them, and then those coming after (this second generation)."[1]

Also, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

«At the end of every hundred years, Allah raises up in this (Muslim) Nation one who will renovate the religion for it.»[2]

The Prophet (PBUH) also said:

«Good actions will be present in me and my Nation till the Day of Judgment.»[3]

He also said:

«My Ummah (i.e., Muslim Nation) will never agree upon a falsehood. So when you experience a disagreement, you should adhere to the [view of the] majority.»[4]

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(1) Related by Muslim.

(2) Related by Abû Dâwûd, chapter on Battles (*Al-Malâhim*).

(3) See *Kashf Al-Khafâ'* (Revealing Hidden Matters), 396/1; Al-Asrâr (The Secrets), 195 and *Ad-Durar* (The Pearls).

(4) Related by Ahmad, Ibn Mâjah and At-Tirmidhî.

3. The Pillar of *Ijtihâd* which depends upon the sound understanding of the above-mentioned two pillars.

The Prophet (PBUH) said: «*At the end of every hundred years, Allah raises up in this (Muslim) Nation one who will renovate the religion for it.*»

Also: «*Good actions will be present in me and my Nation till the Day of Judgment.* »

Accordingly, Islamic discourse is the accurate and complex *Shar'î* guiding structure which is governed by a group of *Shar'î* intellectual, cultural, literary, linguistic and historical disciplines. It is issued by some Muslim institution or individual to another in order to achieve certain *Shar'î* goals by using different *Shar'î* symbols and methods.

Having linguistically and technically defined Islamic discourse and established an Islamic background for it, it is time to clarify its bases and pillars. But before tackling this issue, it is worth reviewing the historical development of Islamic discourse since its emergence until the 14^{th} century A.H.

A Historical Overview of Islamic Discourse

The Early Days of Islamic Discourse

The bases, values, trends and goals of Islamic discourse were formed by the Prophet (PBUH) when he (PBUH) called different tribes (Arabs, Jews, Christians, Romans, Persians, etc.) in Mecca, Medina and all over the Arabian Peninsula to embrace Islam, and when he (PBUH) prepared the generation of the Companions who worked as guidelines and played a key role in the Islamic discourse. (1)

The Prophet (PBUH) decisively established the components and methodologies of conveying the Divine discourse to humankind. Thus, he completed the previous prophets' efforts, which represent the accumulation of the Divine ordinances for misguided mankind. In addition, The Prophet (PBUH) laid down the foundations of the values and practices of the sound Islamic discourse that significantly reinforce the basic elements of change within the Muslim individual and enhance the components of the discourse of change in relation to his own self as well as "the other" by meaningfully

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(1) See Ibn Kathîr, *As-Sîrah An-Nabawiyyah* (The Prophet's Biography), 4th edition, (Beirut, Dar Al-Ma'rifah 1400 A.H.), and Safiyyur-Rahmân Al-Mubârakafûrî, *Ar-Rahîq Al-Makhtûm* (the Sealed Nectar), first edition, (Algeria, Ash-Shihâb co. 1400 A.H.). Also, see other books of the Prophet's biography such as Ibn Hishâm's, Sheikh Muhammad Al-Ghazâli, *Fiqh As-Sîrah* etc.

and valuably dealing with the main elements of the process of *Da'wah* (the dissemination of the Islamic teachings).

From the very beginning, Islamic discourse highlighted the importance of these fundamental and dynamic elements of cultural change so as to lead Arabs out of the darkness of idol worship to the light of Islam which, in turn, paves the way to save mankind from slavery, injustice and tyranny.

In his formation of the generation of the Companions, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) sought to study these elements of change, depending upon the revelation that nourishes its knowledge and sources of its culture through Divine Ordinances, values and Qur'anic instructions.

Despite the fact that there were various religions and social customs in the Arabian Peninsula, a condition that suggests the impossibility of uniting its inhabitants, the Prophet (PBUH) managed, thanks, firstly, to Allah's Support and then to his own efforts, to recognize the importance of this internal element in the process of change. Therefore, he expended his utmost efforts to handle it in every possible way to the extent that it dominated his endeavors until his death. Allah, the Almighty, affirms this in His Book saying:

﴿ ***This day I have perfected your religion for you, completed My Favor upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion.*** ﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 3]

In his call to Islam, the Prophet (PBUH) focused on urging people to embrace Islam by uttering the two declarations of faith (i.e. There is no God but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah), believing them in their hearts and, then, acting accordingly. Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) focused on Prayer as a vital symbol that respectively proves the integrity of the Divine values.

For deploying this key, monotheistic component in the process of change conducted by the Prophet (PBUH) with the Companions, Arabian Peninsula, then the territories surrounding it, and for ensuring the dissemination of the Islamic Call beyond the Arabian Peninsula, even after his death, the Prophet (PBUH) gathered together all the underlying elements of change, including spiritual and material, and efficiently deployed them in the sound Islamic discourse. These elements are represented by the accurate review of the interaction that occurs among the various components (the mind, sentiments, reality, etc.) of the person who receives *Da'wah*.

Allah's Messenger (PBUH) focused on the dimensions of time, space and methods of conveying the discourse. Furthermore, he deployed his deep understanding of the interaction among these dimensions in order to enhance the effectiveness of the Divine Discourse with the Arabic recipients, especially the elite.

Despite being simple and direct, the methods of conveying the discourse never hindered him from conveying the content of the Islamic Call to the polytheists of Mecca, nor impeded them from communicating directly with the Prophet (PBUH) to hear his discourse and consequently come to their conclusion concerning it. (1) Moreover, the Prophet (PBUH) and the Companions succeeded in conveying the message, despite the resistance of the hypocrites, Jews and disbelievers of Mecca.

In conveying the discourse, the Prophet (PBUH) followed a gradual approach in relation to the circles of the discourse (individuals, groups then nations); its structures (simple, complex, theoretical then concrete); places (near then far); and indications and methods (familiar then unfamiliar).

Thus, he presented the most ideal discourse that could effectively convey the Divine Revelation. (2)

Accordingly, the Islamic discourse managed to establish a foothold in the Arabian Peninsula, starting from Mecca, Medina then the near Arab and Jewish tribes. Such a discourse became the most convincing discourse that could handle the problems of reality. It confidently overcame and replaced all other defaming discourses of the tyrants, Jews and Christians in Mecca and came out on top.

The most important strategic achievement of the Islamic discourse is represented by the formation of a righteous and ideal generation which was able to apply the Islamic discourse to reality for themselves and then others, both locally and internationally.

In its first contact with the Polytheists, this unique generation outlined the message of Islam. In two short statements, Rib`î Ibn `Âmir (may Allah be pleased with him) managed to convey the message of Islam honestly when he replied to Chosroes, the Persian king, by saying:

«We came to lead humankind out of the worship of people to the worship of their Lord; from the narrowness of the worldly life to the wideness of the Hereafter; and from the injustice of false beliefs to the mercy of Islam.»

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(1) See the Companion's biographies such as Ibn Al-Athîr's *"Usd Al-Ghâbah"* (Lions of the Forest).

(2) See `Abdul-Latîf Hamzah's "Media in The dawn of Islam" (in Arabic), 1st edition (Cairo, Dâr Al-Fikr Al-`Arabî 1970).

The Islamic Discourse: Age of Universality:

The Islamic Discourse made its way towards "the other" in the Arabian Peninsula after the general climate became suitable for *Da'wah* (the dissemination of Islamic teachings). Its Divine values attracted "the other", who had been afflicted by injustice and ignorance for a long time, and it dazzled him with its wisdom. Moreover, it mellowed his mind by spreading the feelings of brotherhood and peace as a part of its unprecedented civilizational dialogue aiming at saving humans from their current reality and replacing it with a better one.

The Islamic discourse also followed the traditional means of the call, being reinforced by the ability of the people who were in charge of such a discourse to coexist and interact with "the other" as well as with the new reality. Accordingly, they acquired the ability to understand and develop new ways that helped to convey the discourse to "the other".

Therefore, "the other" found the discourse that provided convincing solutions to many spiritual and real-life issues that had remained ambiguous and unsolved for many centuries. Thus, he enthusiastically accepted it and started to defend this divine discourse and enhance its communicative tools in a way that benefited the discourse.

The Islamic discourse expanded to cover many races, peoples and nations and, consequently, earned much support. Meanwhile, it made use of the experiences of "the other" that helped it to be in the forefront of cultural leadership, despite the malicious plots hatched by its enemies after their conventional means of hostility were of no avail.

The sound Islamic discourse disseminated rapidly due to the fact that it enjoyed unique potentials and principles that combined absorbing the present with shaping the future.

The most important strategic factor that helped the Islamic discourse to spread out rapidly is that it included principles of freedom, justice, brotherhood, equality, peace and tranquility for all those who believed in it.

Moreover, it granted those who embraced Islam the optional right of having an absolute, fair Islamic citizenship, having their blood, property and honor protected and empowering them according to their talents and potential. Accordingly, the believers transmitted this religion from the time of the Companions onwards. As a result, religion was transmitted only by the scholars of the nation. [1]

(1) See, for example, Ahmad Shalabî "Encyclopedia of the Islamic History" (in Arabic), 2nd edition, Cairo, Dâr Al-Fikr Al-`Arabî, 1982.

The Islamic Discourse: Age of Decline

The Islamic discourse went on providing humankind with the divine teachings during the first seven centuries using its traditional and newly created means. The elite who learned from the Prophet (PBUH), and who were in charge of this discourse managed to revive, reinforce, enhance and renew it. Thus, they lived up to the Prophet's saying:

«*At the end of every hundred years, Allah raises up in this (Muslim) Nation one who will renovate the religion for it.*»(1)

As a result, many subsequent scholars and preachers believed that the Islamic discourse, as delivered from their predecessors, was capable of containing people's problems and cultural progress, forgetting that renewing and developing its structures, approaches and means is the only way to keep it a living force that is able to guide people's life.

After the three best centuries of the Islamic state, imitation marked the Islamic discourse on the grounds of emulating the Companions and following the guidelines of these three best centuries marked by the Prophet (PBUH) when he said:

«*The best people are those living in my generation, then those coming after them, and then those coming after (this second generation).*»(2)

Due to this, many generations who relied on imitation and praised the *Salaf 's* achievements presumed that the predecessors left nothing for the successors to worry about, so there would be no need to renew the religion, exert efforts and rethink about matters that the ancestors had decisively and finally stated.

With the passage of time, people became inclined to imitate to the extent that they considered any attempt of renewal as a kind of condemned innovation (in religion) that should be brought to an end. Furthermore,

fanatics began to defame the spirit of creativity and renewal, vilifying its advocates before the rulers as well as the public under the pretext of preserving the Islamic heritage. As a result, scholars in Andalusia and other parts of the Islamic world were tortured, banished and killed.

Besides, hidden forces of destruction started to destroy the Muslim Nation after their defeat in the battles of Al-Qâdisiyyah (Qadisiya), Nahawand (Nehavend), Agnâdîn (Ajnadain) and Al-Yarmûk (Yarmuk).

(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd, chapter on "*Al-Malâhim*" (Battles).
(2) Related by Muslim.

These forces managed to undermine the sound Islamic discourse and crippled a great amount of its creativity and potential that would have been able to develop the Islamic discourse as well as its means of conveyance.

In addition, fanatics stirred rulers and people against Sufis and philosophers, who were expelled, tortured and killed. Consequently, the ideological hostility was aggravated to the extent that help was asked from the crusaders and the Mongols. Hence, capitals of the Islamic world such as Toledo, Crdoba, Valencia, Seville, Bukhara, Samarkand, Baghdad, Damascus and Halab [Aleppo] collapsed one after the other. Egypt, on the other hand, had been threatened by crusaders and Mongols. The Umayyad dynasty in Andalusia, the Abbasid and Fatimid dynasties in the East, and the Almohads and Almoravids in Morocco fell and were succeeded by weaker states that could not protect Islam. (1)

The Islamic world drowned in a hasty discourse aimed at restoring its cultural and military dominance. It managed to do this in reality in the 7^{th}, 8^{th} and 9^{th} centuries. Nevertheless, imitation as well as ideological fanaticism marked the Islamic discourse and, subsequently, paved the way for the modern crusade after the collapse of Granada, the last Muslimbastion, in 897 A.H.

During this critical period of the Islamic discourse, "the other" took major steps forward in ways of spreading knowledge and different discourses using verbal or written means. During this period, Johann Gutenberg invented the printing press in 1439. The printing press contributed to enhance the awareness of "the other", who started to print the New Testament in Arabic, spreading propaganda using a rival discourse that aimed at disturbing the remains of the Islamic discourse which was afflicted at the time with the Sufis' fancies, imitations and inflexibility.

In spite of the new blood brought to the Islamic culture, after the fall of Baghdad and Crdoba, represented by the Ottoman Caliphate 735 A.H., imitations, Sufis' fancies and inflexibility were still dominant over the Islamic *Da`wah* (the dissemination of Islamic teachings). The Islamic world, thereof, suffered a collapse of moral, scientific and intellectual values which was merely masked by the Ottoman victories which continued for

(1) See, for example, Ibn Al-`Imâd Al-Hanbalî, "Shadharât Az-Zahab Fî Akhbâr Man Zahab" (Fragments of Gold concerning the stories of the Predecessors); Ibn Kathîr," Al-Bidâyah wa An-Nihâyah" (The Beginning and the End); Ibn Al-Athîr, Al-Kâmil Fî At-Târîkh (The Complete in History); Ibn Taghrî Bardî, "An-Nujûm Az-Zâhirah fî Akhbâr Misr wa Al-Qâhirah" (The Brilliant Stars in Stories of Egypt & Cairo); As-Siyûtî, "Husn Al-Muhâdarah" (Beauty of the Lecture); Usâmah Ibn Munqidh, *Al- I`tibâr* (Considerations) etc..

three centuries. However, this cover/mask was removed revealing a state of weaknesses that afflicted the sound Islamic discourse. As a result, the Islamic world fell prey to the devastating' crusades. The *Da'wah* and *Jihâd* related discourse, unfortunately, could not rescue the Islamic world from occupation, despite the great enthusiasm to evict the enemy after its 'harm' had greatly intensified. (1)

The Modern Islamic Discourse: Age of Revival:

The long years of lagging behind the progress of civilization have ended, and the Arab and Islamic world have experienced a bitter reality. With the passage of time, factors of the cultural revival interacted together and resulted in a new Arab and Islamic renaissance at the beginning of the 19th century. Such renaissance declared a flourishing reality that was prepared for by a revivalist discourse praised by Muslim reformists in the different parts of the Arab and Muslim world.

This rejuvenating Islamic discourse sprang from the following elements:

- Remains of the traditional, crippled discourse which gave a bad picture of the golden age of receding.
- Discourses of the domestic reality, which was full of defeatism and backwardness.
- Discourses of external challenges, which fifirmly tried to restore its golden ages. (2)

The revived Islamic discourse has faced many challenges and attempts to defame and distort it. It has been motivated by a sincere zeal to defend Islam and refine its presentation from any confusion. Moreover, it aimed at saving the Muslim mind from misguided views. This enthusiastic discourse was motivated by two different views:

The fifirst: aims to restore the great Arab and Islamic glory.

The second: aims to end the miserable and critical state of affairs. (3)

Restoring the past glories of the Arab-Muslim nation was a priority in all the modern Islamic discourses. Additionally, these renovatory discourses varied according to their factors, causes and aims, following, in the meantime, the same ways and philosophies of the past discourses but in more modern formulations and much suitable ways. Furthermore, these discourses have

(1) Sheikh Muhammad Al-Ghazâlî, "*Ad-Da'wah Al-Islâmiyah Tastaqbil Qarnha Al- Khâmis 'Ashar*" (The Islamic Call Faces its Fifteen Century), 1st edition, Algeria, Dâr Alhudâ for publishing, 1987. p. 44.

(2) Ahmad Muhammad Jâd, Philosophy of the Cultural Project, (Washington, The International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1995) 1/211.

(3) See Sheikh Rashîd Rida, "History of the Imam" (in Arabic), first edition, Cairo, Al- Halabî Printing Press, 1329 A.H.

swung from *Salafi* to *Sûfi*, doctrinal *Ijtihâd*-related, and cultural renovatory *Ijtihâd*-related schools. We are going to shed light on these schools and their structures. [1]

1. *Salafi* School

At the beginning of the 13th century, the Wahhâbî and Shawkânî Schools formed a traditional movement of the *Salafi* Renovatory School in the Arabian Peninsula. These schools were followed by other *salafi* renovatory movements in the Arab and Muslim World during the 19th century. For instance, In Iraq this school managed to revive the tradition of the early *Salaf* at the hands of the revolutionary Mahmûd Shukrî Al-Alûsî, a prominent figure of the school.

2. *Jihâd*[2]-related *Sufi* School

In the same period, the Muslim World witnessed the emergence of the *Jihâd*-related *Sufi* School represented by As-Sunûsyyah movement which was headed by Sheikh Muhammad Ibn 'Alî As-Sunûsî Al-Jazâ'irî AlKabîr in the Sahara; Al-Mahdâwyyah movement headed by Sheikh Muhammad Al-Mahdî As-Sûfî in Sudan; Prince 'Abdul-Qadir Al-Jazâ'irî's *Jihâd*-related *Sûfi* movement against the French occupation (1832-1847); the Far West movement (headed by Sheikh Al-Qandûz, Sheikh Al-Kanûnî and Sheikh Al-Khattâbî) against the crusades and the India Scholars movement 1857 in addition to the revolution against the English occupation in 1858. *Jihâd*related *Sûfi* Schools managed to offer a more mature and more effective discourse. [3]

Moreover, this school was characterized by having a spiritual balance, being religiously moderate and having an effective regulation for *Jihâd* and affairs of life in order to keep the remains of the Arabic Islamic culture present in the institutions, cities and other bodies.

Moreover, the School kept away from the disheartening trends that paved the way for foreign occupation to control the Arab and Islamic World, as was the case with some of the Algerian *Sûfi* figures that had been marginalized. [4]

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(1) See Muhammad Tahârî, "The Concept of Reform between Jamâlud-Din and Muhammad 'Abduh" (in Arabic), Algeria, the National Book Organization, 1994.

(2) Fighting in Allah's cause.

(3) See for example Ahmad Sidqî Ad-Dijânî, "As-Sunusyyah Movement, Formation and Development in the 19th Century" (in Arabic), 1st edition, Beirut, Lebanon house for publishing 1967 and Muhammad Fu'âd Shukrî, As-Sunusyyah as a Religion and State, 1st edition, Cairo, Dâr Al-Fikr Al-'Arabî 1948.

(4) See Ahmad Hamânî, "Conflict between *Sunnah* and *Bid'ah*" (in Arabic), Constantinople, Al-Ba'th for publication, 1984. and Abû Al-Qasim Sa'd Allah, The National Algerian Movement 1900-1930 (Algeria, National Company for publication, 1970.

3. The Educational *Sufi* School

This school was represented by An-Nûr movement led by the reformist *Sufi* sheikh Badî' Az-Zamân An-Nawrasî. It emerged as a result of the critical circumstances caused by the suppressive acts and the despotism of the secularist Turkish political power directed against wide areas of the Islamic World. It also emerged in other parts of the Islamic world such as India and Western Africa. (1)

The educational *Sufi* school innovated ways through which it managed to keep the remains of the Arab Muslim culture, thus forming a cultural production that can be added to the glorious output of the Muslim mind in the modern age.

4. The Doctrinal Renovatory School

This school was represented by all Muslim scholars, *Faqîhs* and preachers all over the Muslim world including Al-Qarawyyûn, Az-Zaitonah, Al- Azhar, Al-Haramayn, An-Najaf, Qom, Baghdad, Damascus and the other Muslim scholarly and religious bodies.

It offered a moderate religious discourse and led the Muslims wisely, encouraging them to observe their values as far as possible taking into account the reality of the Muslim World that suffered from backwardness at the time. It also paid attention to the occupation, which controlled people's destiny in general and the Muslim nation in particular, not to mention the Arab regimes' despotism.

5. *Ijtihâd*-Related Renovatory School

Apart from the other Renovatory Schools in the modern age, the *Ijtihâd*-Related Renovatory School was established by the Muslim philosopher and reformist, Jamâlud-Dîn Al-Afghânî in Egypt, during the last two decades of the 19th century. It was based on a modern and a true realization of the ability of the sacred sources to revive the Islamic culture as long as its advocates correctly understood the Islamic teachings, recognized the concepts which are permanent and valid for all times and places as well as the flexibility of its variable notions. (2)

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(1) See Ihsân Qâsim As-Salihî, Badî' Az-Zamân Sa'îd An-Nawrasî, 2nd edition, , P.19. Istanbul, An-Nur's Research Centre Press, 1987.

(2) See Lothrob Staudard, *Reality of the Islamic World*, translated by 'Ajjâj Nuwayhid, 1st edition, Cairo, Al-Babî Al-Halabî for Publishing, 1936.

The sound discourse of the *Ijtihâd*-Related Renovatory School found a wide-scale approval in the Arab and Islamic World which was occupied by the modern crusading imperialism. This was due to the wide horizons and the flexibility of the Islamic discourse. It spread also in Egypt and the East in general with the emergence of Al-Manâr school represented by Al-Manâr Magazine and the two reformists, Sheikh Muhammad `Abduh and Rashîd Rida. (1)

The school's organizational structure was developed, being based on the foundation of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was led by Hassan Al-Bannah, and its branches all over the Islamic World in addition to individual and group cultural movements such as those of Malik Ibn Nabî, Ismâ`îl Râjî Al-Farûqî and Jawdat Sa`îd.

Also, the school was developed with due to the emergence of the Constitutional School in Tunisia headed by Sheikh `Abdul-`Azîz Ath- Th`alibi and his party, the Tunisian Constitution; Al-Badisyyah School in Algeria led by `Abd Al-Hamîd Ibn Bâdîs, Muhammad Al-Bashîr Al- Ibrâhîmî, Al-`Arabî At-Tabsî, At- Tayyib Al-`Aqabî and Mubârak Al- Mîlî; and Al-Khattâbiyyah School in Morocco with the movement of Al-Istiqlâl (Independence) headed by Sheikh `Abdul-Karîm Al-Khattâbî and Sheikh `Allâl Al-Fâsî. (2)

In addition, it was supported by scholars of the Levant and Palestine under the leadership of the Sheikhs `Abdul-Qadir Al-Husaynî, Amîn Al-Husaynî and `Izzud-Dîn Al-Qassâm and the Iraqî scholars and fighters of the Rashîd `Alî Al-Kilânî's Revolution, 1940. Besides, the school was supported by Persian scholars, the Anti-Tobacco movement and the *Fatâwa* (*Shar`î* Opinions) of prohibiting any dealings with the English people. It also found a broad support among scholars

and fighters of the Islamic Soviet Republics in middle Asia and in India represented in *Nadwat Al-`Ulamâ'* (Council of the Scholars), the *Fatâwa* prohibiting any dealings with the Eastern India company, the

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(1) Ahmad Muhammad Jâd `Abdur-Raziq, *Philosophy of the Cultural Project* (in Arabic), 1/211 and Anwar Al-Jindî, "Uprising of the Arabian Thought in The Face of The Occupation" (in Arabic), 1st edition, Cairo, Ar-Risâlah for Publishing 1971.

(2) For more information, see `Abdul-Karim Abû As-Safsâf, "Algerian Muslim Scholar's Society" (in Arabic), (1931-1956), p. 55-57; Jamâl Qannân, "Issues and Studies in the Modern and Contemporary Algerian History" (in Arabic), p.134; and Ahmad Al- Khatîb, "The Algerian People's Party" (in Arabic), p.68.

revolution against English occupation in 1857, At-Tanwîr (Enlightenment) by Muhammad Iqbâl and the Islamic Group led by Abû Al- A'lâ Al-Mawdûdi as well as some efforts in the Philippines, Java and Malaysia. (1)

In spite of its widespread appeal and influence in the modern age, the Islamic discourse failed and was crippled due to many internal and external factors. Among these we should mention the fact that many conspiracies were planed against the Islamic discourse because it sought hard to enlighten the Muslim nation about its bitter reality and about its present and future. It worked to dedicate its loyalty to Allah alone, as was the case with the discourses of the various Islamic Renovatory Schools.

The Islamic discourse was and will remain in continuous conflict with this tyrannical power until one of them emerges victorious. Allah, the Almighty, decisively says:

﴿ ***And never will Allah grant to the disbelievers a way (to triumph) over the believers.*** ﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 141]

Strategy and Components of Islamic Discourse

Levels of the Spread of Islamic Discourse

Before the cessation of Revelation, the Islamic discourse was crystallized in its eternal and divine form represented by the sacred references (i.e., the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah*) conveyed to the Muslim nation through the practices of the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions. The Islamic discourse has steadily and reasonably gone through all the tribal, local, national and universal levels.

Concerning these levels, the Islamic discourse has carefully and precisely adopted a gradual approach regarding the various dimensions of time, place and entity. It has successfully managed to spread out all over the world in the illuminating way transmitted to us in the first Islamic references. Had it not been for a set of factors that helped the Divine or Prophetic Message to interact with those who received the Islamic discourse at the cognitive, psychological and intellectual levels, the Islamic discourse would not have had such a great success.

(1) See Muhammad Iqbâl, Renewing the Religious Thinking in Islam, translated by 'Abbâs AL-'Aqqâd, Dâr Asia, Beirut, 1985.

Moreover, the Islamic discourse pays much attention to the individual differences concerning the reception and acceptance of its message, and the interaction among all individuals. It also helps constitute the frames of intellectual, social and psychological unity of individuals, which represent the base for every universal Islamic discourse.

Further, the above-mentioned factors have helped the teachings of the Islamic discourse to be in harmony with the recipients of the discourse. As a result, they may be attracted or turned a way from it, according to the mental, psychological and spiritual ground upon which they were raised.

Thus, the theoretical and practical Islamic discourse has moved gradually and dependably to become dominate over other heavenly and manmade religions until it became universal. It has prepared itself to deal with the opposing points of view, as it involves techniques and mechanisms of how to deal, acknowledge and coexist with "the other". In doing so the Islamic discourse depends on its divine values, which include many rules of how to deal with "the other", in times of peace or aggression. Allah, the Al-Mighty, says: ﴿***There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion.***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 255]

He also says: ﴿***For you is your religion, and for me is my religion.***﴾ [Al-Kâfirûn (The Disbelievers): 6]

Furthermore, the Islamic discourse pursues its eternity with regard to time, place and entity, and goes from the level of acknowledging the existence of "the other" and guaranteeing "the other's" rights and freedom, to a higher level involving working with "the other" in making, forming and building a system of life, while benefiting from the remaining virtues of the other religions and creeds. This, in my eyes, was the greatest merit of the universal Islamic discourse by which its civilization and leadership managed to be universal during the first five *Hijirî* centuries.

As for the moral values and effective realism, the virtue of respecting and coexisting with "the other" is less important than the virtue of cooperating with "the other" in making, forming and building a system of life since the latter makes use of the virtues remaining in "the other's" old religious discourse. Moreover, this value is the basic one missing in "the other's" discourse towards other types of discourse in general and the Islamic discourse in particular.

Strategy and Components of the Islamic Discourse

Whoever pores over the spirit of the Islamic teachings can easily discover that it is universal. For example, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾***Say, [O Muhammad], "O mankind, indeed I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, [from Him] to Whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth. There is no deity except Him; He gives life and causes death." So believe in Allah and His Messenger, the unlettered Prophet, who believes in Allah and His Words, and follow him that you may be guided.***﴿ [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 158]

Allah also says:

﴾***And We have not sent you except as a bringer of good tidings and a warner to all mankind.***﴿ [Saba' (Sheba): 28]

Moreover, Allah, Glorified be He, says:

﴾***O Prophet, indeed We have sent you as a witness, a bringer of good tidings, a warner, one who invites to Allah, by His permission, and an illuminating lamp.***﴿ [Al-Ahzâb (The Allied Parties): 45-46]

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*I have been given five things not given to any one else before me: (1) Allah has made me victorious by awe (by putting fear into the hearts of my enemies) of a distance of onemonth journey; (2) the earth has been made for me (and for my followers) a place for praying and a means to purify (through Tayammum); therefore, anyone of my followers can pray anywhere when the time of a prayer is due; (3) the booty is made lawful for me though it was not lawful for anyone else before me; (4) I have been given the right of intercession (on the Day of Resurrection); and (5) every Prophet used to be sent to his nation only but I have been sent to all humankind.*»[1]

Facts and Indications of Success

The Islamic discourse developed gradually till it reached the universal level at the hands of Allah's Messenger (PBUH) and his Companions within the frame of the Muslim community. This development can be witnessed according to the components of the following equation:

Glorious Text (Qur'ân and *Sunnah*) + *Da'wah* suitable for the period of time + efforts (by the Prophet and callers) + social entity + sound understanding of the Text + techniques of conveying the right meaning of the Text + application of the aims of the Text = **the components of the Islamic discourse.**

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî.

The elements of this equation were governed by strict cognitive, intellectual, cultural and *Shar'î* criteria, which ensured success and made the components of the discourse effective so that it was able to move from the national to the universal level. This was achieved through accurate and effective discourse formulas that start with purifying minds and souls from the remains of idolatry and *Jahiliyyah* (Pre-Islamic Period of Ignorance). In this connection, 'Umar Ibnul-Khattâb said:

«The Prophet used to eliminate the remnants of Al-Jahiliyyah (Pre-Islamic Period of Ignorance) and fills us with (the pure teachings of) Islam.»

These discourse formulas are then combined by the enlightening Islamic discourse needed to purge souls and minds of the darkness of *Al-Jâhiliyyah*. Many of the Prophet's Companions described the earlier state of darkness as follows:

"We were ignorant people who would kill one another, enslave one another, take others as lords besides Allah, sever ties of kinship, commit abominable acts, deem lawful what Allah made unlawful, drink wine and deal in *Ribâ* (usurious dealings). But Allah conferred a great favor on us when he sent the Prophet (PBUH) who led us out of the darkness (of disbelief) to the light (of Islam)... etc."[1]

Moreover, such formulas were followed by an active reviving discourse that brought souls back to life (i.e., faith). These formulas were accompanied with an instructive and dictating discourse suitable for the circumstances of time and place as well as the abilities of the recipients. In this regard, Allah, Glorified be He, says:

﴿And is one who was dead and We gave him life and made for him a light by which to walk among the people like one who is in darkness, from which he can never to emerge?﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 122]

Harmony between the level of the discourse and its influential ability is among the most important standards of the discourse. This guarantees that the discourse has an equal and adequate effect on minds and souls, in the first place, and on the desired geographic and demographic reality in the second place.

Furthermore, every level of national or international spread needs a special and different form of effectiveness which needs to be included in the discourse, and be recognized by those concerned with conveying it sincerely to the targeted recipient and it also should be felt warmly and spontaneously by those thirsty for faith.

(1) See the Companion's description of their religion, Ibn Kathîr's "The Prophetic Biography" (in Arabic), 1/489. See also Ja'far Ibn Abû Tâlib's speech to An- Najâshî (Negus) during the Immigration to Abyssinia, Ibn Kathîr's "The Prophetic Biography", 2/10.

Indications of the Success of Originality and Culture Discourse

During the past centuries, the Islamic discourse depended on the Divine references as the sources of values, standards, rules and individual, behavioral, emotional, real, local, national and international principles.

Also, these references were sources of local and international cultural progress and inspiration through which the Muslim mentality worked to convey its values, principles, behaviors and manners to the world.

At that time, before the lofty Islamic values were well-known among the people, the old world lived in cultural and civilizational backwardness, so it was amazed at the sublime values and principles of Islam. Soon, people were willingly involved in the Islamic *Shar'î* system that gave them the opportunity to develop their talents, potentials and ideas. As a result, they pounced to develop and enrich the Islamic civilization with the remaining fruits of any remaining good, virtue and reform in their heritage that could not be changed by paganism.

Through the first centuries of Islam, the Islamic world carried out mental and scientific activities in mosques and schools hoping to understand and learn from the mental and spiritual lessons of the Divine Revelation (i.e., the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*) so as to translate them into their reality as an Arabic Islamic culture that covered different nations, as long as they made an effort and had a sincere will and righteous leadership. Such a culture managed to overcome all other cultures and form an Islamic one that removed the darkness of the paganism of the middle-ages.

Moreover, such discourse, through the Divine Texts (i.e., the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*) and *Ijtihâd*, managed to meet all the present and future civilizational needs of the individual, group, society and nation. This active interaction between man and the Divine Discourse did not cause any violation of the natural laws and systems of life and environment, unlike what happened with the modern and contemporary man-made laws that breached the laws of the universe, environment and human life.

The history informs us about the Muslim's high position when the sound Islamic discourse was implemented. The Muslims were superior to other nations that were suffering from a racist and despotic discourse, whether a religious or a man-made one.

Thus, the Islamic World in the past, covering a wide geographic area and a large demographic expansion, attracted various people all around the world, who were searching for freedom, guidance and honorable life.

No Muslim felt that his position, Muslim nation or culture was in a lower rank compared to other nations. On the contrary, the prevailing feeling throughout the Muslim World was derived from Allah's Saying:

﴿***And to Allah belongs [all] honor, and to His Messenger and to the believers, but the hypocrites do not know.***﴾ [Al-Munâfiqûn (The Hypocrites):8]

This principle did not allow any Muslim to deny the high cultural level and standard of living enjoyed by the Muslims as well as the *Dhimmîs* (i.e., free non-Muslims living in and under the protection of an Islamic state) alike.

Thus, the Arabic Islamic civilization presented the convincing answers and acceptable solutions to the problems of misguided humanity, thanks to the offerings of the Islamic discourse with its Divine and *Ijtihâd*-oriented aspects. It remained so till the nation abandoned the most important element of its Message represented by guiding misguided humanity during times of paganism and distorted religions and philosophies. As a result, the Muslim mind was afflicted with a serious disease which had a negative effect on its behaviors, talents and offerings, which extended to everyday life in the Arabic and Muslim world.

The Muslim creative mind became unable to provide the Arabic Islamic civilization with convincing solutions to its problems, meet its ambition in life or help the other nations, who had been fascinated by the Muslims' achievements for a long time, obtain satisfactory answers. Further, the situation was aggravated when the Muslim nation became the target of the pagan ideas and beliefs, making use of the state of diseases, the abandonment of the Message and the creative gap from which the Muslim mind suffered. Such malicious ideas and beliefs aimed but to fill the Muslim World with material, man-made analyses and thoughts. This urged the Muslim scholars, *Faqîhs* and preachers to move to restore to the Muslim nation its lost rank.

Thereupon, the following question was aroused: Why, when, where and how can we restore our Muslim nation's position?

Those responsible for the Islamic discourse did not find any difficulty in determining the type of reforming Islamic discourse necessary to push the Islamic nation forward. This was due to many considerations, such as their firm conviction of the sacredness of the Divine Islamic references (i.e., the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*), the richness of the Islamic historical experiences, and the sempiternity, effectiveness, sincerity and ability of the Islamic discourse to lead this nation out of its current backwardness. This is in addition to the continuous attempts of the reformists, preachers and intellectuals to control the effective mass media and communications, which are able to convey the right image and content of the Islamic discourse to the targeted recipients.

The Crippled Islamic Discourse in the Modern Age

Harmony between the Islamic Discourse and Its Means of Conveyance:

In the beginning, Islamic discourse was strong, convincing, diverse and accurate thanks to the great efforts of the Prophet (PBUH) in relaying it to the targeted recipients in the Arabian Peninsula, in spite of their different religions and creeds (e.g., Atheism, Polytheism, Christianity, Judaism, etc.), their various ways of life (e.g., tribes and clans fighting over water and pasture), and their different levels of understanding (e.g., ignorant, illiterate, etc.).

This sound Islamic discourse marvelously succeeded, at the beginning of its social, communicational interactions, to demonstrate the content of the Divine teachings using rational, emotional, linguistic and spiritual approaches that were in harmony with the Arab mind. It also succeeded in transferring these pure Divine teachings to the misguided Arab mind that was sunk in the darkness of superstitions and myths of *Al-Jahiliyyah*.

The Prophet (PBUH) exerted his utmost efforts to select the best means of *Da'wah* to convey Allah's Message to the people. He (PBUH) managed to use diverse techniques, times, places and levels of discourse concerning his mission of *Da'wah*. Allah, Glorified be He, testified that His Prophet (PBUH) succeeded in accomplishing his mission, praised him, and commanded the angels and the believers in different ages to ask Him to confer blessings upon him and to grant him peace, saying: ﴿***Indeed, Allah confers blessing upon the Prophet, and His angels [ask Him to do so]. O you who have believed, ask [Allah to confer] blessing upon him and ask [Allah to grant him] peace.***﴾ [Al-Ahzâb (The Allied Parties):56]

Following the Revelation's guidance, the Prophet (PBUH) sought to reach a state of harmony between the texts and contents of the Islamic discourse on one side, and the approaches and techniques of conveying it on the other side. This resulted in a harmonious process of *Da'wah* that had a great effect on the targeted recipients, whether they were enemies like the Jews and polytheists, potential recipients like the Arab tribes who used to give advise to the Prophet (PBUH) such as Khuzâ'ah, or true recipients like the Companions of the Prophet.

The Prophet (PBUH) excelled at conveying his message just as he did in choosing the best and most useful means and techniques of *Da'wah* to add to those of the former Prophets and Messengers.

The Prophetic creativity was tangibly clear in his ability to use diverse techniques for the discourse, according to the environment and circumstances of the recipients as well as the issue he (PBUH) desired to convey. Hence, the Prophet's approach of *Da'wah* was very unique and matchless among the Arabs.

Also, the Prophetic creativity was clear as he approached diverse geographic and demographic places, not thinking of the nearness or farness of the places where he conveyed the *Da'wah* – an issue in which he (PBUH) set the best example by exerting great physical efforts – but of the people he (PBUH) hoped would accept the Message. For example, At-Tâ'if was only 70 miles from Mecca and though the Prophet traveled to it and faced many troubles in his way, it rejected his call. By contrast, Medina was five times farther than At-Tâ'if; however, they believed in him and accepted his call.

This result was due to his concerted efforts for the *Da'wah*, which continued for more than two years.

Additionally, Allah's Messenger (PBUH) introduced the most excellent communicative means to disseminate the Islamic discourse across different circles of association and places, calling the closest, then the closer and so on; and entities, calling individuals, groups, tribes, Arabian and Jewish tribes and neighboring kingdoms, respectively.

Moreover, the Prophet's creativity was tangibly felt in the use of diverse means and techniques for the discourse. That is, there was a discourse aimed at individuals, and other types of discourse aimed at groups, families and the public. There were also types of discourse characterized by being sermonic, argumentative, educational, social, political, secret and open, etc. Furthermore, the Prophet (PBUH) excelled at variegating the times of the discourse according to the circumstances and characteristics of each phase of time, in a way that crystallized the teachings and bases of the Islamic *Da'wah*.

The distinct Islamic discourse laid down the bases of communicating with "the other" in the light of the principles derived from the Prophetic *Hadîth* stating:

«We were ordered to talk with people according to the level of their knowledge.» (1)

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(1) .. See "*Kashf Al-Khafâ'*" (Exposition of Ambiguity), *Hadîth* No. 592; "*At-Tamyîz*" (Perception), *Hadîth* No. 32; "*Ad-Durar Al-Kâminah*" (The Hidden Pearls), *Hadîth* No. 35; and "*Tadrîb Ar-Râwî*" (Training the Narrator of *Hadîth*) 370.

Contemplate also the saying of Ibn Mas`ûd:

«If you talk with people with something beyond their understanding, some of them will fall into Fitnah (dissension).»[1]

Moreover, Imâm `Alî said, *«Address people with what their minds can comprehend: Will you be pleased if Allah and His Messenger (PBUH) are belied?»*[2]

These teachings went on flourishing in the first four centuries, enlightening the Muslim mind with the noble principles of communicating with "the other" and urging the development and enhancement of techniques of understanding and conveying the truth by the generations that had inherited the Prophetic knowledge.

Factors of the Success of the Islamic Discourse:

The Islamic discourse gained a foothold and success during the first centuries thanks to the following factors:

1. A deep understanding of the contents and components of the Islamic discourse concerning its divine, heritage and *Ijtihâd*-related dimensions by understanding the divine references, reality and conveying the Islamic discourse soundly.

2. An accurate and sound review of the various elements (i.e., reason, emotions, reality) that interact inside the people addressed by the Islamic discourse as well as the mutual interaction between them and the discourse.

3. A profound understanding of the elements and contents of the Islamic discourse with regards to its local and international dimensions as well as the differences between the two in terms of structure, approach and effect.

4. A deep and accurate understanding of the elements and contents of the Islamic discourse in the light of its historical context represented in the Prophet's biography and his Companions' practices.

5. An astute understanding of the real local and regional facts in general and the international ones in particular, and distinguishing between the material which should be used when addressing the local people and that which should be used when addressing "the other" at the international level.

6. Non-negligence of the accumulation of human experience in two aspects: theoretical (including scientific, cognitive, philosophical, cultural and intellectual) and practical (including vocational, technical and instrumental).

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(1) Related by Imâm Muslim.

(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî, Chapter on *'Ilm* (Knowledge).

7. An accurate review about "the other" in order to choose a suitable form of discourse.

8. Existence of a generation of sincere and truthful callers who did their utmost to defend Islam, like Khubayb Ibn 'Adyy, 'âsim Ibn Thâbit, Mus'ab Ibn 'Umayr, etc. By doing so, they lived up to the Prophet's words:

«This knowledge shall be carried by the most just among every generation, who will remove from it the misinterpretation of the ignorant, deception of the falsifiers and distortion of the extremist.» [1]

9. The achievement of the effective traditional and modern approaches of *Da'wah*.

The Weakened Islamic Discourse in the Modern Age

Due to a set of internal, external, conspiratorial, theoretical and real factors, the sound Islamic discourse lost its active role in guiding Arabs and Muslims in the 14th century A.H. (19th century A.D.), despite its strong resistance to the factors of internal weakness and foreign invasion. As a result, a man-made pagan discourse based on fighting and rebelling against the sound Islamic discourse has been spread by those who adopt the ways of the West and the Orientalists. Moreover, the Arabic Islamic world has suffered, since the 20th century, from the infiltration of this pagan man-made discourse into some infatuated Muslim minds that spread propaganda, encouraging the use of this discourse instead of the sound Islamic discourse which, as they claim, stands in the way of progress, renovation and development and is accepted, according to the claims of secularists, by only the public and reactionary individuals.

After the permeation of the Western man-made discourse, coercively enforced by some regimes that blocked all the ways of reaching and improving "oneself " as well as "the other" and restricted all the effective methods of dialogue and creativity necessary for reviving and enhancing the society and nation. This man-made discourse gathered its reviews under the pretext of fighting totalitarianism and supporting freedom, individualism and creativity. It even dared to present itself as a change-oriented substitute for the original Islamic discourse in its own homeland.

The two types of discourse, the original and the rebellious, have engaged in a decisive conflict in the Islamic countries. Each of them aims at taking the leadership of the world. Unfortunately, the positive rebellious

(1) Related by Al-Bayhaqî.

discourse has geographically and demographically managed to take control over the region's destiny. As a result, the Arab-Islamic Nation has lost its cultural role at the local, regional, theoretical, real, present and future levels, distracting the sound original discourse from assuming its role, and narrowing the way before its areas of influence and effectiveness on "the other" in the international arena. The positive rebellious discourse has managed to do this by causing the original discourse to be occupied with itself and pushing it to concentrate on its threatened soul with the aim of forming a strong and effective internal discourse

Despite the partial geographic and demographic victories of the sound original Islamic discourse, it has not lived up to the expectations of the Message and the Islamic culture, since the trend of the rebellious discourse still pushes the original discourse into conflicts and marginal issues, hindering it from playing its ideal local and international role in conveying the Message.

In the light of the conflict between the sound original discourse and the rebellious one, the Arabic and Muslim public opinion has divided into two opposing attitudes:

a- The major attitude that supports the sound original discourse and includes those who call for adhering to religiousness, reform and good actions. Yet, it does not have but a few means of communication and conveyance.

b- The small, partial attitude that includes a rebellious minority that fifights values, religiousness and originality under the pretext of supporting individualism and liberty. This attitude is supported by the hidden and visible powers of evil and it dominates the effective means of communication, propaganda and effectiveness.

Supporters of the second attitude have worked hard during the last hundred years to disseminate the rebellious, pagan discourse in the Arab and Muslim world, imposing it through their effective means of communications claiming that it is the ideal reformative discourse which can help the nation achieve the desired cultural progress.

In this regard, many names in the Arab and Muslim world have risen to prominence among whom different roles are cunningly distributed.

They adopt the values of the rebellious discourse both theoretically and practically. As a result, the liberal arts, intellectual and philosophical trends, and liberal, human, environmental, educational and social fields have come to light. They have employed their potential in order to serve this discourse, enforcing it on the Arab and Muslim world and fighting the sound Islamic discourse.

Why Islamic Discourse Failed in Modern Age:

After reaching a universal level during the first century A.H., the Islamic discourse dominated both the Islamic and international arenas of thought.

But since the fifth century, it has begun to deteriorate due to it abandoning its directive, educational and effective role in the spiritual as well as real life of societies. It has entered the cycle of rigidity, imitation and civilizational backwardness. Hence, it has lost its position to the positive rebellious discourse that has presented itself as an alternative to misguided humanity.

Reasons behind the failure of the Islamic discourse in the modern age can be divided into various internal and external reasons, as follows:

First: Internal Reasons:

1. Not using the means of *Da'wah*, communication and media properly, although some Arab and Muslim countries use them, but only rarely and ineffectively.

2. Difference of opinions among schools and sects regarding some issues of the religion. This kills all the hopes of unity and the effective local and international influence. Moreover, this difference results in neglecting the fundamental rule that states: "Let us work according to what we agree upon, and excuse each other for what we disagree upon."

3. Blind imitation of the West and East in addition to importing foreign reformative experiences that do not suit the spirit of the nation, with out considering the Muslim nation's defects as well as the suitable solutions needed to overcome its troubles.

4. An absence of the spirit of *Ijtihâd*, renovation and creativity in addition to a spread of a common state of backwardness from which the Muslim nation suffers as well as a refusal to acknowledge such a state, as asserted by Dr. 'Abdul-Hamîd Abû Sulaymân in his book entitled "*Azmat Al-'Aql Al-Muslim*" (The Crisis of the Muslim Mind) and Dr. Burhân Ghalyûn in his book "*Ightiyâl Al-'Aql*" (Assassination of the Mind).

5. Dominance of the spirit of desperation over the mind and conscience of the Muslim individual and society, and the emergence of a state of civilizational illusion that induces them, owing to the malicious call towards idolatry, to glorify certain people and sanctify intellectual, cultural and historical fifigures, and foolishly pay extra attention to the main fifigures of globalization under the banner of different pretexts.

6. Influence of the despotic, totalitarian and dictatorial regimes over the Muslim mind resulting in slavery, retardation and imitation that prevent creativity and innovation.

7. Spread of defeatism among the members of the Muslim society due to the mischievous ideas, which are disseminated through the media, propaganda and malicious civilizational means, which hinder the Muslim mind from regaining its strength.

8. Diminishing the spirit of sacrifice and self-denial in the cause of Islamic discourse.

Second: External Reasons

1. Prevalence of the spirit of morbid universal arrogance that withholds the nation's ambitions, especially the Arab and Muslim nation, due to conspiratorial and historical considerations, and the aggravation of the Western dominant centralization and prevention of the transfer of modernity to "the other" in general, and the Arab and Muslim nation in particular.

2. Utilization of bodies, organizations and agencies, fairly or wrongly, to prevent the Muslim nation from making any scientific or technological progress, especially in the fifields of nuclear and electronic technologies.

3. The effective deployment of misinformed means of mass media and propaganda against the Arab and Muslim nation and its related issues by using different methods of direct or indirect deception as well as means of various fifields including communication, information technology, literature, cinema, art, historiography, press, propagandaa, public opinion, the internet, etc. This is in addition to the propagation of malicious philosophies, ideologies and poisonous ideas.

4. Creation of cultural centers and intellectual elites in the Arab and Muslim countries that support the West, advocate it and help it keep its dominance over the Muslim nation.

Factors for Success of Contemporary Islamic Discourse:

In order to overcome the obstacles of the past and the traditional view of its contents, the contemporary Islamic discourse should include the following methodological principles:

1. A profound understanding of the contents and components of the Islamic discourse with regard to its heritage, *Ijtihâd*-related and sacred features. This should be done in the light of the modern scientific and cognitive facts that have substantially contributed to various fields of science, including medicine, health, communication, information as well as the contemplation of nature, universe and one's own self.

2. A deep understanding of the elements and contents of the Islamic discourse regarding its local, regional, international and universal dimensions taking into account the difference between them all in terms of structure, approach, and influence.

3. A deep understanding of the components of the Islamic discourse in the light of its historical, experimental events.

4. Understanding of the local and regional facts in general and the international ones in particular, distinguishing between the discourse addressed to the local recipient and the other type of discourse addressed to "the other".

5. Not neglecting the accumulation of culture and social manners in terms of its two aspects: the theoretical aspect (including the scientific, cognitive, philosophical, cultural and intellectual dimensions) and the practical aspect (including the technological, communicational and instrumental dimensions).

6. Overcoming the stage of admiring and taking pride in the history of the nation, especially with matters relating to Islamic history that put the international contents of the Islamic discourse into practice.

7. Accurate understanding of "the other" so as to rightly select the suitable, accepted and effective discourse for addressing him.

8. Attempting to get rid of the fallacies resulting from the previous understanding of the content and structure of the other's religious discourse. This can be achieved through creating a state of harmony and tolerance with "the other" and convincing him that we are a dialogueloving nation.

9. Communication with "the other" so as to invalidate his own inherited conviction to abstain from carrying out dialogue with us, even if only agreeing to face the urgent issues and dilemmas from which all humanity suffers, such as drug abuse, abortion, AIDS, suicide, family disintegration, organized crime and prostitution, and which is condemned and fought against by many churches and civil societies.

10. Feeling the responsibility undertaken by "the other" due to the Muslims' avoidance of bearing their civilizational role and taking part in leading the world in the age of globalization. This is in addition to not abstaining from expressing the benevolent values derived from the Islamic discourse towards the other. Due to not expressing these benevolent values, the other has had the opportunity to control the rest of the world.

Conclusion

As soon as we ensure the availability of the postulates necessary for a sound and clear understanding, reading, guidance and conveyance of the Islamic discourse, and for it to be able to address the whole world which is thirsty for the decisive knowledge of the Revelation, the Islamic discourse will be capable of restoring its civilizational message. In my humble opinion, this will be the greatest advantage of both the local and international Islamic discourse over the theoretical and religious perceptions and views of "the other".

If the universal Islamic discourse can strengthen its ties with "the other" and make its religious system open for others to understand and review its contents scientifically and methodologically, unlike the attitude of the Orientalists and Western thinkers, it will reach the others' heart and mind. This is because others will find nothing else which is available for humankind besides the Islamic discourse but the repeated ideas and pagan beliefs enveloped in the mottos of the contemporary Western civilization.

Accordingly, the originality, competence and soundness of the Islamic discourse on the local, regional and universal levels will be established.

Moreover, its methodology of addressing the other will be asserted. Furthermore, this will prove the competence of the Divine Ordinance in which we have believed and which Allah, the Al-Mighty, ordered us to use when discussing with the other, when He said:

﴿***And We have [repeatedly] conveyed to them the Word [i.e. the Qur'ân] that they might be reminded.***﴾ [Al-Qasas (The Narrative): 50]

Allah knows best, and our last words are: "All praise is due to Allah, the Lord of the Worlds."

Features of Islamic Discourse

Dr. Muhammad Munîr Hijâb(*)

In Da'wah (i.e. dissemination of Islamic teachings), it is wise to use well-thought out policies and plans, offer good training and education for Da'wah personnel, have awareness of the nature of target audiences and effective methods of public discourse, employ the media to its potential and evaluate programs to check for inconveniences.

Introduction:

To obtain a good idea about the problems and needs of the Islamic nation, we should first have a close look at the contemporary Islamic discourse, identifying its strengths and weaknesses. This can serve as a plan of action for any subsequent efforts to enhance the Islamic awareness, create more sound mentalities and alleviate the adverse conditions of the Islamic nation.

The public discourse is by definition an ideological system with a set of concepts and theories related to certain aspects of social life. For example, there is historical discourse, philosophical discourse, political

(*) Academic researcher, South Valley University (Egypt).

discourse, etc. When talking about the Islamic discourse we mean a comprehensive Islamic conception, derived from the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah*, of different aspects of life (culture, politics, economics, education, etc.). In fact, Islam addresses wholly all the physical and spiritual human needs without exception. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿... ***Never have We neglected in the Book to Register anything...*** ﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 38]

Thus, the Islamic discourse has distinguishable features compared with, for example, the Christian, Jewish or secular discourses.

Any scrutiny of the contemporary Islamic discourse, compared to its true, perfect image as determined by the Qur'ân and the *Sunnah*, will indicate clear weaknesses. To eliminate these defects and bring the Islamic discourse to its original healthy state, the following proposed guidelines can prove helpful:

- Define the general characteristics of the Islamic discourse in the light of the Islamic ideological foundations.

- Define the characteristics of the *Shar'î* discourse (i.e. one that deals with the Heavenly Ordinances and religious fundamentals).

- Define the characteristics of the *Ijtihâd* discourse (i.e. one that deals with changeable matters subject to human reasoning and discretion).

Features of Islamic Discourse In Light of Islamic Ideology

In accordance with the Islamic ideology, the following characteristics should be present in the Islamic public discourse:

1- Ideological Unity:

The Islamic discourse is the product of all human experiences of monotheism over history, from Adam up to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon both of them). This emphasizes the importance and desirability of making use of the historical experiences of the past Prophetic Messages.

The Muslim is religiously obliged to believe in all the Messengers and Prophets who came before Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). This sense of unity has influenced the history of the *Da'wah* ever since the time of Prophet Muhammad. This is represented by the following aspects:

a- Unity of content: Consistency is very obvious in the Islamic *Da'wah*.

For example, all the Qur'anic Verses never contradict each other, which in itself is miraculous. In this sense, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***... Had it been from other than Allah, they would have found therein much contradiction.***﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 82]

This absolute consistency can never be found in any other discourse. There is another aspect of unity within the Islamic discourse itself, which is the consistency of information and teachings of the Prophetic *Sunnah* with the Noble Qur'ân. This is explained by the following Qur'anic Verses:

﴿***Nor does he (i.e. Muhammad) speak of (his own) desire. It is but a Revelation that is revealed (to him).***﴾ [An-Najm (The Star): 3, 4]

b- Unchangeability of content: The fundamentals of the Islamic discourse are permanent and never subject to any difference of opinion among the Muslim scholars. They are always the same, whenever they are used. This unified nature makes the person's engaged in Islamic discourse act as a worldwide institution of *Da'wah*, united by one bond, Islam. This makes it possible to make use of the accumulative legacy of *Da'wah* and integrate the new improvements and modern techniques into the underlying principles governing *Da'wah* activities.

Invariability applies also to the spatial dimension. The Islamic fundamentals are always the same for any part of the world, since they are determined by Allah, the Lord of the worlds; an advantage which is not available for any other spiritual message. Therefore, the Muslims active in the call need only to convey these principles, without any addition or distortion, keeping to the highest degrees of truthfulness and vigilance. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***... Upon you is only (the duty to) convey (the Message of Islam)...***﴾ [Ash-Shûrâ (The Counsel): 48]

He also says: ﴿***And if he (i.e. Muhammad) had fabricated about Us some (false) sayings, We would have seized him by the right hand (i.e. with Our Power and Might). Then We would have cut off his aorta.***﴾ [Al-Hâqqah (The Inevitable Truth): 44-46]

c- Inherent unity within the Muslim Individual: In the Islamic ideology, thought and action are strongly correlated. Allah, Exalted be He, exhorts Muslims to be self-consistent. He says: ﴿***O you who believe! Why do you say what you do not do? Most hateful it is in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do.***﴾ [As-Saff (The Ranks): 2, 3]

This correlation is also reflected in the fact that Islam maintains a balance between all the physical, emotional, mental and social needs of the Muslim. This enables the Muslim individual to attain integrity and a pure human nature. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***And by the soul and He who proportioned it and then inspired it (with discernment of) its wickedness and its righteousness, He has succeeded who purifies it and he has been doomed who instills corruption into it.***﴾ [Ash-Shams (The Sun): 7-10]

2- Scientific and Cultural Nature of Islamic Discourse:

The very first thing ever revealed of the Glorious Qur'ân was about acquisition of knowledge. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Recite in the name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists). He has created man from a clot. Recite, and your Lord is the Most Generous, Who has taught (writing) by the pen.***﴾ [Al-'Alaq (The Clot):1-4]

The repeated mentioning of the word "recite" in the previous verses is a way of urging one strongly to seek knowledge and use the mental abilities

actively and creatively. In another example, Allah commands His Messenger (PBUH) in His Qur'ân to say:

﴿... ***and say, "O My Lord! Increase me in knowledge.*** ﴾ [Tâ-Hâ: 114]

Muslims are religiously obliged to study and add to the religious as well as worldly sciences. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*Seeking knowledge is obligatory upon every Muslim.* »[1]

Also, the Qur'ân praises the merits of scholars and scientists. Allah says:

﴿... ***It is those who have knowledge, from among His servants, who fear Allah (most)...*** ﴾ [Fâtir (The Originator): 28]

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*Scholars are the heirs of the Prophets.* »[2]

3- Islamic Identity

The Islamic identity is the body of values and principles, in both religious and worldly affairs, which the Islamic discourse is designed to disseminate and instill into people's minds and hearts. Thus, the duty of the *Da'wah* activists is to manifest the sound and prudent Islamic approach to different political, economic, social and cultural aspects of life and they should never import any irrelevant foreign theories to solve the problems of their own societies. The outline of this *Da'wah* was determined as far back as the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Imâm Ahmad (may Allah confer mercy upon him) reported Jâbir Ibn `Abdullah to have said that `Umar Ibnul-Khattâb came to the Prophet (PBUH) with a book that he took from some of the People of the Scriptures (i.e., the Jews and Christians).

`Umar began reading it to the Prophet (PBUH) who became angry. He (PBUH) said:

«*Are you uncertain about it, O Ibnul-Khattâb? By the One in Whose Hand is my soul! I have come to you (i.e. Muslims) with it (i.e. Islam) white and pure. (O Muslims!) Do not ask them about anything, for they might tell you something true and you reject it, or they might tell you something false and you believe it. By the One in Whose Hand is my soul! If Mûsâ (i.e. Moses) was living, he would have no choice but to follow me.*»[3]

(1) Related by Ibn Mâjah.
(2) Related by At-Tirmidhî.
(3) Related by Imâm Ahmad.

4- Logic and Verification

The Islamic discourse respects the human mind and appreciates human effort. It uses logic and rational arguments as the bases of positive discussion and constructive debate. The Noble Qur'ân encourages Muslims to use and develop their minds and to contemplate the universe around them. The exact word "reason" and related words are mentioned in the Qur'ân about fifty times. This implies an emphasis on meditation on the universal laws and phenomena and the creation of the world. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Indeed, in the creation of the heavens and the earth and (in) the alternation of night and day are signs for those of understanding.***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 190]

The Qur'ân also urges the believers to use the mind and perception to address everything, including religion. Allah says:

﴿***And the example of those who disbelieve (in Allah) is like the example of one (i.e. Muhammad; PBUH) who shouts at that (flock of sheep) which hears nothing but calls and cries. (They are) Deaf, dumb and blind, so they do not understand.***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 171]

5. Simplicity:

The content of the Islamic discourse is intrinsically simple and easy to understand. In his book, "The Preaching of Islam", the English historian Thomas W. Arnold wrote that Islam "is based on the creed that there is no god but Allah and that Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah. This simple faith does not require any long or profound experience, nor does it cause any mental difficulties when trying to comprehend it. Anyone, even those with the least amount of knowledge of the theoretical fundamentals of this religion, can understand them and explain them to others, since they are free from theoretical or theological confusions and tricks... This simplicity of discourse is one of the most effective factors in the propagation of Islam." By virtue of this simplicity, within a few years from the conquest of Mecca, Islam spread as far as China in the East and Morocco and Andalusia in the West. Dr. Muhyid-Dîn 'Abdul-Halîm says that Islam addresses the innate nature of the human being, dealing with urgent human needs, conditions and issues. The Islamic principles are strongly and congruently connected with the reality in which people live, so they will find in the Glorious Qur'ân and the Prophet's *Sunnah* guidelines to solve the problems and issues of their life presented in a simple and easyto- understand way.

6. Morality:

Morals are one of the most important components and desirable objectives of the Islamic discourse. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*I have only been sent to perfect the righteous manners.*»[1]

Other *Hadîths* mentioned the manners in detail, such as truthfulness, charity, honesty, maintaining ties of kinship, hospitality, helpfulness, modesty, etc. This is why Islamic discourse associates the Islamic Creed and faith with moral virtues; they all serve to guide, refine and elevate the soul. Submission to and glorification of Allah help stimulate benevolence, fear of Allah and make one pursue the best of everything. Allah, Exalted be He, is the Absolute Perfection of Truth, Beauty, Justice and Goodness. As the tradition goes:

«*(Try to) acquire the manners and attributes of Allah.*»

The Ordinances and Prohibitions of Allah, and the Islamic teachings with regards to worship and human dealings, all are focused on this idea.

Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***We have already sent Our Messengers with clear proofs and sent down with them the Scripture and the Balance (i.e. justice) so that people may establish justice...***﴾ [Al-Hadîd (Iron): 25]

This Qur'anic Verse emphasizes that the purpose for revealing the Scriptures and the sending of the Messengers is to establish truth and administer justice on the earth. Additionally, the criterion used to judge faith is good manners. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*The most perfect among the believers as regards faith is he who is the best of them in manners.*»[2]

He also said:

«*By his good manners a believer will attain the degree of the one who fasts during the day and prays during the night.*»[3]

Furthermore, he (PBUH) said:

«*Nothing is weightier in the scales of a believer on the Day of Judgment than his good manners. Allah treats with displeasure a person who is given to loose and vulgar talk.*»[4]

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(1) Related by Imâm Ahmad.
(2) Related by At-Tirmidhî.
(3) Related by Abû Dâwûd.
(4) Related by At-Tirmidhî.

Thus, Islamic discourse attaches great importance to the moral aspects of the Muslim personality. It is highly concerned with promoting every virtue that elevates human esteem and prohibiting any vice that disgraces it, so that the Muslim individual will be considerate, kind-hearted, tolerant and patient. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***... And speak to people in kind (speech), establish prayer and give Zakâh...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 83]

Allah describes those who have such good manners saying:

﴿***And the (faithful) servants of the All-Merciful (i.e. Allah) are those who walk upon the earth humbly, and when the ignorant address them (harshly), they say (words of) peace.***﴾ [Al-Furqân (The Criterion):63]

Since moral education is so demanding, and for the purpose of exhorting the Islamic discourse activists to be perseverant and progressive when instructing others, the Prophet (PBUH) spent thirteen years in Mecca calling others to Islam diligently and patiently to educate his followers on the perfect Islamic principles. This way, he was able to make them good models of *Da'wah* who later had a great influence on the spread of Islam. This educational technique of the Prophet combined theoretical content with practical application, resulting in good and constructive call material. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Have you not seen how Allah sets forth a parable? (It is that) a good word is like a good tree, whose root is firmly fixed and whose branches are (high) in the sky. It produces its fruit all the time, by permission of its Lord. And Allah sets forth parables for the people that perhaps they will remember.***﴾ [Ibrâhîm (Abraham):24, 25]

7. Sincerity:

A basic component of the Islamic discourse is truthfulness. It is the most important feature of the Noble Qur'ân, the honorable Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the whole Muslim community. The Qur'ân strictly prohibits telling lies and curses the liars in many places. Allah says:

﴿***It is only those who do not believe in the signs of Allah who fabricate falsehood, and it is they who are liars.***﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees):104]

He also says:

﴿***... And avoid false speech.***﴾ [Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage):30]

The Prophet (PBUH) strongly prohibited telling lies and considered it one of the signs of hypocrisy. He said:

«*The signs of the hypocrite are three: If he speaks, he lies; if he promises, he breaks his promise; and if he is entrusted, he breaches the trust.*»(1)

There are several levels of sincerity in Islamic discourse:

Sincerity in actions: Personal conduct should be consistent with speech; the Muslim is instructed never to say what he does not do in practice. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿ ***You order people to be righteous and forget yourselves ...!*** ﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 44]

This means that one should observe his conduct first before he proceeds to advise others, so that he will give them a good example and be more persuasive.

Several studies on the credibility of communication show that the less credible the source of information is among the audience, the less reliable and effective the message will be, and the more it is seen as biased and subjective. All the Messengers of Allah were known for their truthfulness, even before their missions; Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was called by the disbelievers of Mecca as "The Honest and Truthful".

Sincerity in speech: One should talk about things as they really are, without distortion, omission, addition or misinterpretation. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*The faith of a person will not be upright unless his heart is upright, and his heart will not be upright unless his tongue is upright.*»(2)

He (PBUH) also said:

«*I saw last night (i.e. had a dream) that two men came to me. They said, 'The person whose cheek you saw being torn away (from the mouth to the ear) was a liar who used to tell lies and the people would report these lies on his authority till they spread all over the world. So he will be punished like that till the Day of Resurrection.'*»(3)

Emphasizing the accountability for one's speech, Allah says:

﴿***He (i.e. man) does not utter a word except that with him is an observer prepared (to record it).*** ﴾ [Qâf: 18]

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî.
(2) Related by Ahmad.
(3) Related by Al-Bukhârî.

Sincerity in intention: One should be self-consistent; i.e. his speech and conduct should reflect his own beliefs and perceptions. A person may say or do something in which he does not believe because of, for example, courtesy or fear of others. But he can never deceive himself, since the intentions are concealed and no one can know them except for Allah. Allah says:

﴿*Say (O Muhammad), "Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds.*﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle):162]

Thus, Islamic discourse activists should commit themselves to being truthful, introducing role models for others.

8. Moderation:

Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿*And thus We have made you a median (i.e. just) nation that you will be witnesses over the people...*﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*The best of matters is the moderate one.*»[1]

Moderation in Islamic discourse has several levels:

a- Ideological moderation: Islamic discourse combines originality and modernity, keeping a balance between the Islamic Creed and culture and the contemporary human achievements and innovations. It tends towards facilitation when dealing with problems of life, particularly the newly emergent issues which require *Fiqhî* consideration, making use of the Western positive contributions (e.g. democracy, NGOs, peaceful circulation of government, etc.). Islamic discourse holds a highly positive and open-minded approach to others' opinions and thoughts, using a tolerant line of reasoning and constructive dialogue. It rejects the use of violence both in Muslim and non-Muslim countries, unless it is by way of resistance to foreign aggression or occupation.

b- Human moderation: Islamic discourse integrates a person's

individuality with the society. The individual is addressed as an independent entity with a specific personality and perception; one that is entitled to complete freedom of choice, even in terms of good and evil, belief or disbelief. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

(1) Related by Al-Bayhaqî.

﴿***And (by) the soul and Him who proportioned it and inspired it (with discernment of) its wickedness and its righteousness, he has succeeded who purifies it and he has failed who corrupts it.***﴾ [Ash-Shams (The Sun): 7-10]

At the same time, Islamic discourse considers society. It keeps a balance between the individual and the needs and concerns of the society, encouraging solidarity, cooperation and citizenship. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"*The similitude of believers in regard to their mutual love, affection and fellow feeling (of sympathy) is like that of one body; when any organ of it aches, the whole body aches with fever and sleeplessness.*" (1)

Also, Allah says:

﴿***The believers are but brothers...***﴾ [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments):10]

The society of the believers is an integrated entity where the members cooperate in doing good deeds and being righteous. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***... And cooperate in benevolence and righteousness, but do not cooperate in sin and transgression...***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table):2]

He also says:

﴿***... And advise each other to (keep to) the truth (i.e. to do whatever is good) and advise each other to (keep to) patience.***﴾ [Al-'Asr (The Afternoon):3]

So, the duty of the *Da'wah* activists is to mingle with the society, positively affect people's lives and meet their needs by conveying the true religious teachings and sound advice.

c- Concrete-abstract moderation: An aspect of Islamic discourse aims at creating a brotherhood among all people; establishing the values of justice, mercy, sympathy and cooperation; and making the world a place where all people feel that their lives, property, honor and families are safe.

Having much interest in both the concrete and abstract aspects of life, Islamic discourse adopts the following concepts:

The whole universe, with all its entities (plants, animals, water masses, natural phenomena, cosmic bodies, etc.), are created by Allah for the human beings to develop, explore and seek benefits from them. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***And He (i.e. Allah) has subjected to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is on earth - all (are favors) from Him. Indeed, in that***

(1) Related by Muslim.

there are signs (i.e. lessons and advice) for a people who give thought. ﴾ [Al-Jâthyah (The Kneeling): 13]

He also says:

﴾***And He (i.e. Allah) has subjected to you night and day, the sun and the moon. And the stars are subjected by His Command. Indeed, in that there are signs (i.e. lessons and advice) for a people who reason.*** ﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees): 12]

Man consists of two parts: physical and spiritual. Allah has honored Adam and ordered the Angels to prostrate themselves to him. Allah says:

﴾ ***So when I have proportioned him and breathed into him the soul created (for him) by Me, then fall down prostrate to him.*** ﴾ [Sâd: 72]

As a result of this honor, Allah entrusted man with the responsibility of being the master of the earth, developing the universe, building civilizations and spreading goodness. Allah says:

﴾***... He brought you forth from the earth and settled you in it...*** ﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 61]

Human endeavor includes not only affairs of life but also the affairs related to the Hereaftfter. Allah says:

﴾***But seek, through that which Allah has given you, the home of the Hereafter (i.e. the Paradise); and (yet) do not forget (i.e. enjoy) your share of the world...*** ﴾ [Al-Qasas (The Narrative): 77]

This implies an exhortation to deal with the material and spiritual needs on an equal basis. Thus, Muslims are required to believe in Allah, the Angels, the Day of Judgment, Paradise, Hellfire and other unseen matters which we know about only through the Revelation.

Strengthening the belief in the Unseen World helps augment the effectiveness of the *Da'wah*. For example, when Islamic discourse talks about the Day of Judgment, detailing its horrors (for evil people) and pleasures (for believers), one will feel frightened and willing to seek salvation, and also desirous to do his best to gain such endless pleasures. Likewise, when one realizes that he will be strictly accountable for his actions, he will be scrupulous at all times. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾***And We shall place the scales of justice on the Day of Resurrection, then none will be treated unjustly in anything. And if there***

is (even) the weight of a mustard seed, We will bring it. And sufficient are We to take account. ﴾ [Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets): 47]

Thus, people will keep away from indulgence in materialism, injustice, grudges and selfishness, and will be careful about what they do. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***{And say (O Muhammad), "Engage in deeds! Allah will see your deeds, and (so will) His Messenger and the believers...*** ﴾ [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 105]

d- Moderation in Addressing Individual Abilities: Islamic discourse adopts a balanced and considerate approach to human abilities, determining obligations only in view of a person's personal capacity. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Allah does not burden a person beyond his capacity. He (i.e. the person) gets reward for that (good) which he has earned, and he gets punishment for that (evil) which he has earned...*** ﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 286]

Accordingly, when one is sick, sleeping or forgets, he will be pardoned if he does not perform any religious obligation (as long as he performs the appropriate compensation). That is why Islam prohibits all kinds of intoxicants and narcotics, on the basis that they affect one's consciousness and faculties.

The same principle applies to public communication. Islamic discourse considers the audience's mental abilities and levels of education, which differ from one person to another. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*We were ordered to talk with people according to the level of their knowledge.*»[1]

The language, content and style of public discourse should be adapted to the diverse levels of understanding of the people. In the Islamic culture, it is a human right to acquire knowledge in a way that suits one's way of thinking, cognitive and spiritual background. Allah says:

﴿***Say (O Muhammad), "This is my way; I call to (worship) Allah with insight, both I and those who follow me. And Exalted is Allah; and I am not of the polytheists.*** ﴾ [Yûsuf (Joseph): 108]

Thus, it is "insightful" to consider the audiences' features so that Islamic discourse is effective and persuasive, being presented in an appealing way.

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(1) *Kashf Al-Khafâ'* (Exposition of Ambiguity), No. 592.

e- Communicational Moderation: Islamic discourse preserves a balance between the two components of communication: The sender (orator) and the receiver (audience). When planning the process of communication, the communicator should always keep in mind that the target audience is attentive and will criticize any inappropriate material. This will guarantee that the general public is provided with sound and reliable religious knowledge, and unaffected by personal prejudices or preferences.

In such an environment, one will feel highly confident, aware and "invulnerable". No deceptive or one-sided ideas will be dictated or propagated by the sources of public information. The underlying principle of Islamic discourse is implied by the following Qur'anic Verse:

﴿***There shall be no compulsion in (the acceptance of) religion...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

The audience is entitled to evaluate and to practice social pressure on the communication officials when they do not comply with the Islamic teachings. This explains why consensus among Muslims is a top priority in Islam. Their agreement on a specific matter necessarily means that it is right. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*My Ummah (i.e. Islamic nation) will never agree upon a falsehood.*»[1]

What is more, under this "social control", the communicator will feel responsible to carry out "self-censorship". He will be always attentive not to present facts contrary to Islam, knowing that the general public is Islamorientated and will never accept any violation of its doctrines.

Islamic discourse addresses the public as a mindful, analytical and judging entity. Governed generally by the Islamic framework, the individual opinions become highly convergent, together forming a public opinion.

This idea can be seen in the following Qur'anic Verse (in which the Prophet (PBUH) asked the disbelievers to meditate on his call, both individually and collectively):

﴿***Say (O Muhammad), "I only advise you of one (thing); that you stand up for Allah, (seeking truth) in pairs and individually, and then reflect." There is not in your companion (i.e. Muhammad) any madness...***﴾ [Saba' (Sheba): 46]

With this unconstrained thinking, they would be likely to reach the truth, as individuals and as a group.

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(1) Related by Ibn Mâjah.

f- Temporal Moderation: Islamic discourse makes a balance between the past and the future, making use of past experiences to plan ahead for the actions-to-come. Our Islamic heritage includes a lot of examples of this temporal approach, such as the creation of Adam, revelation of Heavenly Books, sending of Messengers and the stories of ancient civilizations. In many places, the Glorious Qur'ân calls Muslims to meditate, explore the heritage of former nations and draw lessons from their mistakes.

Obviously, this call has nothing to do with rigidity or narrow-mindedness. Some conservative Muslims look too traditionally at Islamic thought, opposing any renovation or modernization and limiting the mission of Islam to the elimination of any changes in the Muslims' beliefs and practices. Such a way of thinking does not give Islam its due as a comprehensive way of living, a body of perceptions about the Lord God, the universe, humanity and life.

Islamic discourse has a functional relationship with the Message of Islam. It combines permanent, undisputed fundamentals with human contributions and improvements, which stresses the validity of Islam for all times and places. This balanced and progressive approach drives Muslims to scrutinize their behavior and keep being sincere and self-evaluating themselves. In this sense, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿O you who have believed! Fear Allah and let every person (of you) look what he has put forth for tomorrow (i.e. the Day of Judgment), and fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Well- Acquainted with what you do.﴾ [Al-Hashr (The Mustering): 18]

As the saying goes, "Think of your life as if you will live forever, and think of your afterlife as if you will die tomorrow". This conception makes a cause-and-effect association between one's actions of the present moment and his reward in the afterlife. Thus, the individual's mission in life will be to do one's best to have a better life, both in this world and in the Hereafter.

So the tasks of public discourse will be to create better conditions, develop the society's collective mindset and attitudes, and seek social growth.

Islam does not advocate over-conservative, one-sided or shallow thinking. The theorists of Islamic discourse need to understand the true nature of the Islamic Message, the fundamentals of the Islamic Creed and *Sharî'ah*, and the tested-and-proven methods of scrutiny and looking for facts. Thus, they will be fully aware of the comprehensive Islamic approach for all aspects of modern life.

9. Freedom

The Islamic discourse ensures freedom for everyone, whether communicators or the audience, as a human right that should be respected and protected by the whole society. Freedom in Islam is dependent on two bases, i.e. (a) responsibility, and (b) duty.

As indicated by Dr. Husayn Fawzî An-Najjâr in "Islam and Politics", responsibility "is not entrusted to one's conscience or to the law. Rather, it is man's accountability directly before his Lord." The concept of responsibility involves not only apparent speech and conduct, but also hidden intentions. This is based on the belief that Allah, Exalted be He, knows everything in the universe. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿*... He (i.e. Allah) is the All-Knower of the Unseen; not even the weight of an atom or less than that or greater (than it) in the heavens and in the earth escapes His Knowledge."}*﴾ [Saba' (Sheba): 3]

He also says:

﴿*... So wherever you (might) turn (your faces), there is the Face of Allah...*﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 115]

One is accountable for his intentions and deeds before Allah, and will be rewarded for his good deeds and punished for his evil ones. Islam also acknowledges the doctrine of collective responsibility, according to which individuals are to be held responsible for other people's actions if they tolerate, ignore or harbor them, even if they do not actively collaborate in these actions.

From responsibility comes the notion of duty. Respect of individual and public rights is the duty of all citizens, groups and the state. The Muslim community is an integrated whole, within which all individuals have equal rights and duties.

Duty enjoys top priority over all other motives, and it formulates the meaning of freedom and how far it can go. There is no such thing as "infinite freedom"; any human action is regulated by certain determinants, basically derived from the *Shar'î* and social systems. The Islamic *Sharî'ah* governs people's relations and faith, taking its main purpose as being the achievement of human happiness and well-being. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿*... Allah intends for you ease and does not intend for you hardship...*﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 185]

With this in mind, social freedom entails voluntary commitment to the individual and also social interests, which represent the absolute human values and norms. Thus, the only control practiced over discourse practitioners will be their sense of duty and personal responsibility to themselves and to Allah. Also, there will be no foreign influence over the audience, who will freely choose the media material in accordance with their religious and moral values.

Freedom can motivate the communicators to do their best, creatively and efficiently, to spread and consolidate the religious values and create an environment of mutual trust between the media professionals and the audience. In such an environment the Muslim community will be well in place to rise to the numerous challenges facing it.

10. Methodical System:

Islamic discourse is not random, fractionalized or temporary work. It is an integrated, programmed system with an input (planning, goals, strategies, content, target audience, etc.), process (implementation), output (results) and feedback (evaluation, improvement and follow-up). These elements should be put into effect in the field of *Da'wah*, both on the individual and institutional levels.

Practically, the current Islamic discourse lacks the scientific design of *Da'wah* programs and makes minimal use of the possibilities introduced by modern communications and technology. Theoretically, *Da'wah* outreach programs fail to deal effectively with the challenges and problems of the time, such as religious ignorance among specific social groups (youths, children, women and international Muslim communities).

Inadequacy of such programs is the most important reason for wasted efforts and prevalent feelings of mental insecurity and spiritual loss in the face of modern technological and scientific development.

In *Da'wah*, it is wise to use well-thought policies and plans, offer good training and education for *Da'wah* personnel, have awareness of the nature of target audiences and effective methods of public discourse, employ the media to its full potential and evaluate *Da'wah* programs and performance. With dependence on scientific research, consideration of factual circumstances and continuous efforts to overcome obstacles, success will be "as inevitable as death".

Features of *Shar`î* Discourse:

What is *Shar`î* Discourse?

The *Shar`î* Discourse refers to the Islamic doctrines ordained by Allah for Muslims. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿... ***To each of you (i.e. the followers of the Heavenly religions) We have prescribed a law and a clear way. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation (i.e. united in religion)...*** ﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 48]

Allah commanded us to adhere to such doctrines. He says:

﴿***And this (i.e. Allah's Commandments) is My path, which is straight, so follow it; and do not follow (other) paths, for they will separate you away from His Path. This He has ordained for you that you may become righteous.***﴾ [Al-An`âm (Cattle): 153]

It is the duty of Muslims to adopt unified doctrines and ideologies. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*Straighten your rows or else Allah will alter your faces (i.e. cause you to be disunited).*»[1]

This urges Muslims to be unified when praying and in all aspects of life, following the Islamic ideology entirely clarified by the Prophet. Ad-Dârimî reported Al-`Abbâs (may Allah be pleased with him) to have said about the Prophet:

«*By Allah, he did not die until he had shown the path (of Islam) clearly: He had legalized what is legal, made illegal what is illegal, married and divorced, and fought and made peace.*»

The Prophet (PBUH) instructed Muslims to treat each other on an equal basis, no matter what social position they have. The one and only authority over Muslims is the Islamic *Sharî`ah*. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Indeed, those who oppose Allah and His Messenger will be among the most humiliated. Allah has decreed, "I will inevitably be victorious, I and My Messengers." Indeed, Allah is All-Powerful and All-Mighty.***﴾ [Al-Mujâdalah (The Dispute): 20, 21]

The main source of the *Shar`î* discourse is the Glorious Qur'ân, which includes complete guidance in terms of the worldly life and the Hereafter as well as all the sublime instructions and virtues necessary for humankind to achieve maximum happiness and welfare. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî and Muslim.

﴾... ***And We have sent down to you the Book (i.e. the Qur'ân) as clarification for everything, guidance, mercy and glad tidings for the Muslims.*** ﴿ [An-Nahl (The Bees): 89]

The second source is the *Hadîth* of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), to whom Allah gave the Qur'ân, wisdom and all kinds of knowledge and whom He prepared to convey Islam to all the people. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾***And thus We have revealed to you (O Muhammad) an inspiration (i.e. the Qur'ân) of Our Command. You never knew what the Book or faith was (before), but We have made it a light by which We guide whom We will of Our servants. And indeed, you (O Muhammad) guide to a straight path (i.e. the true religion of Allah.*** ﴿ [Ash-Shûrâ (The Counsel): 52]

He also says:

﴾***Nor does he (i.e. Muhammad; PBUH) speak from (his own) inclination. It is not but a scripture revealed.*** ﴿ [An-Najm (The Star):3, 4]

These two integrated sources constitute the underlying ideology of the *Shar'î* discourse and the core part of Islam (i.e. the Heavenly revealed texts which no one can deny). It is called the "discourse of constants" because it deals with the permanent fundamentals of Islam, which are always the same for all Muslims, regardless of time, place and circumstances.

Features of *Shar'î* Discourse:

1. Divineness:

The Islamic *Shar'î* discourse is attributed solely to Allah, Glorified be He. It is totally based on the Noble Qur'ân and the Prophetic *Sunnah*, both having been revealed by Him.

Under this feature, we can identify the principal postulates, concepts and objectives of the Islamic discourse. The first postulate is the belief in Allah as the One and Only Deity, Who has no partner. For those who worship personal desires, wealth, power, etc., Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾***You do not worship besides Him but (mere) names which you have named (i.e. fabricated), you and your fathers, for which Allah has sent down no authority...*** ﴿ [Yûsuf (Joseph): 40]

Islam, in essence, is a full description of why and how to believe in Allah. It governs all human actions, speech and intentions so that one's life is in submission and obedience to the Lord God. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿*Say (O Muhammad), "Indeed, my prayer, my rites of sacrifice, my living and my dying are for Allah, Lord of the worlds. He has no partner. And of this I have been commanded, and I am the first of the Muslims.*﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 162, 163]

Within this Divine approach, the criteria for man's life can be defined as follows:

- **Accountability:** Man is accountable for everything he does or says.
- **Succession:** Allah has entrusted man with succession and sovereignty over the universe.
- **Mastery:** Man is granted mastery over all creatures to make use of them and lead a perfect life by developing the universe according to the Divine instructions.
- **Reason:** Man is provided with an intellect to be able to learn about the Creator and how to worship Him best by reflecting on the Heavenly texts and the natural environments and phenomena, which demonstrate Allah's Greatness and give spiritual pleasure and purifies the soul.
- **Justice:** Man is to be fair with himself, his family, his society and the whole world. Justice is a sense of responsibility, a religious ideal, a source of inner peace and satisfaction, a tolerant route to piety and benevolence, and a sort of self-criticism when mistakes are made.
- **Patience:** In case of pain or afflffliction, we have to be patient and have absolute trust in Allah until the trouble goes away.
- **Openness to Truth:** A believer always seeks the truth. The Islamic discourse should be aware of the facts and conditions of society. To be realistic, it needs to hold firmly to the holistic fundamentals while leaving the trivia of everyday life open to debate and difference of opinion. In other words, it should make a compromise between the permanent rulings of the *Sharî'ah* and the changing demands of reality dedicated mainly to serve the interests of the people.

This Divine feature of Islamic discourse shows the core of the religion. It is not mere repeated words, moving speeches or an abstract philosophy. Rather, religion is practical, motivates its followers to act and have good manners, and secures mental peace, goodness and guidance for the people.

2. Comprehensiveness

The Islamic *Shar'î* discourse is as comprehensive as religion itself. Islam is a complete system of life involving all human affairs and behavior. It is a Message that addresses man at every developmental stage and in every situation. This holistic nature is evident in the Islamic Creed, rituals and regulations; it is a religious, political, economic, social, scientific and legal system.

In his book "Principles of *Da'wah*", Dr. 'Abdul-Karîm Zidân classifies the Islamic rulings with regard to human actions into the following categories:

a- Rulings related to Creed and faith.

b- Rulings related to morals and merits which should be adopted by all Muslims.

c- Rulings related to social relationships, which include:

- **Rulings for the family:** They deal with marriage, dowry, alimony, etc. (personal law).
- **Rulings for transactions:** They deal with sale, pawning, lease, etc. (civil law).
- **Rulings of judiciary:** They deal with lawsuits, legal decisions, testimony, evidence, etc. (procedural law).
- **Rulings concerning Foreigners:** They deal with non-Muslim foreigners who live in Muslim countries (private international law).
- **Rulings concerning governance:** They deal with political systems, types of governments and their relationship with citizens (constitutional law).
- **Rulings concerning funds:** They deal with the national revenue and expenditure, and financial activities of individuals and institutions (financial law).
- **Rulings for crimes:** They deal with illegal actions and their penalties (criminal law).

All of these rulings are comprised perfectly within the Islamic *Sharî'ah*. Islam is a Message for all people, covering all the components of a person's personality (soul, body, mind, emotions and conscience), for all times and places.

To sum up, the scope of Islam covers all aspects of life: Faith; rituals; transactions; traditions; human relations with one's family, acquaintances and others; and the economic, political, social, administrative, judicial and international systems. The Islamic discourse should act on both levels: the individual level (intrapersonal needs) and across the board (interpersonal needs).

Being so comprehensive, the Islamic discourse engages all Muslims as its activists. A scholar, physician, engineer, teacher (or whatever) can engage in *Da'wah*, each according to his own experience, level of education and circumstances.

3. Universality

The Islamic discourse is universal, thorough and designed for all people. Its goal is to communicate the Islamic *Da'wah* worldwide, correctly and convincingly, so that everyone is clear about what Islam is. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿ ***(We sent) Messengers as bearers of good news and warnings, so that humankind will have no argument against Allah (that they never heard about Allah) after the Messengers...*** ﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 165]

Emphasizing Islamic universality, Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***... It (i.e. the Qur'ân) is not but a Reminder to the worlds.*** ﴾ [Yûsuf (Joseph): 104]

﴿***... So that he (i.e. Muhammad; PBUH) may be to the worlds a Warner.*** ﴾ [Al-Furqân (The Criterion): 1]

﴿***Say (O Muhammad), "O humankind! Indeed, I am the Messenger of Allah to you all, (from Him) to whom belongs the dominion of the heavens and the earth...*** ﴾ [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 158]

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

"I have been sent to all humankind." (1)

This universality of Islamic discourse was initiated by the Prophet (PBUH) himself. He conveyed his *Da'wah* to all his contemporaries in every possible way. He spoke in private and public, met people everywhere, talked with traveling convoys, traveled to other tribes, made peace treaties, fought others (only when they fought Muslims), and sent delegates and letters to the sovereigns of remote countries.

Islam abrogated all the previous Heavenly Messages, as Dr. 'Abdul-Halîm Mahmûd noted in his book "Islam is a Universal Call". Before Islam, every Prophetic Message specifically targeted one aspect of human life. For example, Prophet Mûsâ (i.e. Moses; PBUH) eliminated paganism and disseminated monotheism, and Prophet 'ؘîsâ (i.e. Jesus; PBUH) worked hard to promote moral and spiritual virtues, emphasizing the importance of love,

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(1) Related by Muslim.

humility and charity. By the time of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), humanity was in urgent need, and fully prepared, to receive a perfect Message that addresses every aspect of life and introduces successful Heavenly solutions for human issues. Consequently, this Message was sent to replace all the previous Messages, while still acknowledging them as Heavenly Messages. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾***And whoever seeks a religion other than Islam it will never be accepted from him, and in the Hereafter he will be among the losers.***﴿ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 85]

Features of *Ijtihâd* Discourse

Difference of Opinion in *Ijtihâd*

Variety is a human feature. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾***And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community (following one religion; i.e. Islam); but they will not cease to differ, except for him on whom your Lord has bestowed Mercy (i.e. guided him to embrace Islam)...***﴿ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 118, 119]

People have different aptitudes, preferences and understanding. Some tend towards physical work, while others are more intellectually inclined. People also differ in their judgments on things depending on their approaches, purposes and backgrounds. For example, the Companions and the followers of Prophet Muhammad differed on many issues, but they always sought the final word from the Islamic teachings. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾***O you who have believed! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (i.e. Muhammad; PBUH) and those in authority among you. If you disagree on anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination.***﴿ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 59]

They all were faithful in seeking the truth, but they recognized and respected others' viewpoints, if they complied with the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, while keeping good relations with them.

Difference in opinion among scholars is due to various reasons, including:

1. No one knows everything about anything. Therefore, a scholar may claim a scientific judgment based on *Shar'î* evidence or texts which are not known by others.

2. Some *Shar'î* texts have different degrees of authenticity and reliability. Thus, a less authentic text may be accepted by some scholars, but not others.
3. Some *Shar'î* texts have ambiguous or diverse meanings. So, a scholar may understand a text as having one indication while others adopt different indications.

Difference of opinion is useful in many ways. It secures multi-dimensional analysis, the most reliable results and continuous refinement. Scholarly debates have encouraged Islamic intellectual movements, ever since the early days of Islam, and this resulted in the formulation of standardized and strict guidelines to regulate the process of *Ijtihâd* and help settle disputes.

The bottom line is that disputants should avoid unfairness, contempt or laying accusations of disbelief against those who have different opinions as long as they are in accordance with the *Shar'î* texts.

Islam prohibits fanaticism about one's opinions and quarrelling with others for ideological reasons. It calls for contemplating the wisdom behind its requirement, using its most basic fundamentals firmly and unanimously and leaving the door open for human intervention when applying the *Shar'î* principles to people's lives. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***And do not be like those who divided and differed after the clear proofs had come to them...***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 105]

﴿***O you who have believed! Obey Allah and obey the Messenger (i.e. Muhammad; PBUH) and those in authority among you. If you disagree on anything, refer it to Allah and the Messenger, if you believe in Allah and the Last Day. That is better and more suitable for final determination."}***﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women): 59]

﴿***And hold firmly unto the Rope of Allah (i.e. the Qur'ân) all together and do not become divided...***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 103]

One or More *Ijtihâd* Discourse:

Approaches to matters are as diverse as people themselves. The question is whether such different views and perceptions all are included within Islam or there is only one Islamic approach to things and anything else is null and void. Here, we need to consider the *Shar'î* discourse of fundamentals which should be followed by all while allowing for difference of opinion in terms of how to apply such fundamentals to matters of daily life. This helps to:

1. Avoid extreme contradiction between viewpoints which may give a false impression that Islam is ambiguous or difficult to understand;
2. Attract notice to the fact that there are multiple Islamic solutions that deal with the different circumstances of Muslims, all of which are derived from the constant Islamic fundamentals;
3. Come to an agreement that *Ijtihâd* is a human endeavor liable to scrutiny and correction in light of the accumulation of knowledge and the understanding of changing circumstances; and
4. Emphasize that there are various advisory institutions (*Muftftis*, Islamic boards, academicians, etc.) which contribute to *Ijtihâd* and how to deal with the *Shar'î* texts, and that their opinions are specific to their respective circumstances and community, but not to others.

Renovation of Religious Discourse in the Light of *Ijtihâd*:

As noted above, *Ijtihâd* and renovation are applicable only to changeable matters, i.e. the application of the human understanding of *Shar'î* texts to affairs of life. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«At the end of every hundred years, Allah raises up in this (Muslim) nation one who will renovate religion for it.»[1]

This *Hadîth* means that over successive eras there will appear distinguished scholars and reformers with good reasoning and are reliable enough to re-explain the concepts and rulings of Islam and relate them to the new issues and conditions of life. However, the constant Islamic fundamentals in Creed, rituals, transactions and morals derived from the revealed Heavenly texts are permanent and unchangeable. It is not religion that changes but rather the points and methods of consideration and *Ijtihâd*.

Renovation relates also to the different aspects of communication (e.g. techniques, contexts, preparation of scholars of *Da'wah*, evaluation of performance and research and development). These aspects go hand in hand with the developments of technology, the humanities, social sciences and the media.

Renovation in this sense is an Islamic necessity for the public iscourse not to be ineffective and out-of-date. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿And We did not send a Messenger except (equipped) with the language of his people so that he might make (the Message) clear for them...﴾ [Ibrâhîm (Abraham): 4]

Language here means the mother tongue of the people in question, their way of thinking and their level of education.

(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd.

Features of *Ijtihâd* Discourse:

The contemporary *Ijtihâd* discourse has certain weaknesses which augment dispute and waste Muslim energies and efforts. This goes completely against the Commands of Allah:

﴾And hold firmly unto the Rope of Allah (i.e. the Qur'ân) all together and do not become divided... ﴿ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân):103]

Some groups differed on major Islamic fundamentals and they were thus judged to be deviant from the core of Islam (e.g. the Bahai Sect). Some groups consider the rulings liable to *Ijtihâd* as fundamentals, and so they showed hostility to those who perform *Ijtihâd*, although Allah says:

﴾The believers are but brothers, so make reconciliation between your brothers... ﴿ [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 10]

The current discourse promotes division, sectarianism and fanaticism rather than reconciliation and open-mindedness. The present Muslim situation is very much like that before Islam, about which Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾... It is He Who supported you (O Muhammad) with His Help and with the believers and united their hearts. If you had spent all that is in the earth, you could not have united their hearts; but Allah united them. Indeed, He is All-Mighty and All-Wise. ﴿ [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils):62, 63]

He also says:

﴾Indeed, Allah loves those who fight in His Cause in a row (i.e. united) as though they are a solid structure. ﴿ [As-Saff (The Ranks): 4]

Now, our ranks are disunited, fighting in different directions and for different causes.

As individuals, we do not follow the instructions of our Prophet (PBUH). He said:

«Do not nurse a grudge; do not bid to raise the price (without having the intention of buying); do not nurse aversion or enmity; do not enter into a transaction when others have entered into it; and be fellow brothers and servants of Allah. A Muslim is the brother of a Muslim. He neither oppresses him nor lets him down nor looks down upon him. Piety is here (pointing towards his chest thrice). It is a serious enough evil for a Muslim that he should look down upon his Muslim brother. All things of a Muslim are inviolable for his Muslim brother: his blood, his wealth and his honor. »[1]

(1) Related by Muslim.

Our contemporary discourse includes much self-admiration; underestimation of dissenters; fanaticism in favor of certain doctrines, figures or groups; seeking of power; and mutual grudge. This contradicts Allah's saying:

﴿***O you who have believed! Stand out firmly for Allah, as just witnesses, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah; indeed, Allah is Well-Acquainted with what you do.***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 8]

Its main concern is to find fault with others in order to prove one's superiority. Its dominant language entails individual wishes, personal prejudices and desires, which is strongly prohibited by Allah. He says:

﴿***... And do not follow (your own) desire, as it will lead you astray from the Path of Allah. Indeed, those who go astray from the Path of Allah shall have a severe torment for having forgotten the Day of Reckoning.***﴾ [Sâd: 26]

He also says:

﴿***And if the Truth (i.e. Allah) had followed their inclinations, the heavens and the earth and whoever is in them would have been ruined. Rather, We have brought to them their Reminder (i.e. the Qur'ân), but they are turning away from their Reminder.***﴾ [Al-Mu'minûn (The Believers): 71]

The *Ijtihâd* discourse is generally full of fallacious arguments aimed to defeat other doctrines, no matter whether or not the truth is clear and the dispute could be settled. Further, many incompetent persons proceed to undertake public discourse and intrude upon the field of religious consultation, which is religiously prohibited. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Indeed, (for) those who dispute about the Signs (i.e. Proofs, Ordinances and Revelations) of Allah with no authority (i.e. knowledge and authorization) having come to them, there is nothing else within their breasts except arrogance (that stops them from accepting the truth and accepting you (Muhammad) as a Prophet), (the extent that) they will never reach (having the upper hand which they want)...***﴾ [Ghâfir (The Forgiver): 56]

He also says:

﴿***(For) those who dispute about the Signs (i.e. Proofs, Ordinances and Revelations) of Allah with no authority (i.e. knowledge and authorization) having come to them, it is greatly hated to Allah and to those who have believed...***﴾ [Ghâfir (The Forgiver): 35]

They make key religious and *Shar'î* concepts, which the Prophet (PBUH) focused on elaborately and repeatedly in many *Hadîths* (e.g. Islam, faith, benevolence, piety, etc.), incomprehensible. They even confuse priorities; such issues as religious education, refinement of behavior, Pan-Islamic unity, human rights, cooperation against foreign influence, universality of Islam, etc., are not given top priority of consensus. Instead, the public discourse is influenced by mistrust, fanaticism and subjectivity, which causes a waste of energy, division among Muslims, sabotage of trust in *Da'wah* officials and a spread of turmoil.

In our national and international dialogue with the West, we hardly perform *Da'wah* according to the criteria stated by the Qur'anic Verse:

﴿***Invite (people) to the Way of your Lord (i.e. to Islam) with Wisdom (i.e. the Qur'ân and Sunnah) and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best...***﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees): 125]

Given that wisdom is "to convey the truth with knowledge and through our actions" (as defined by Ar-Râghib Al-Asfahânî), or "to put things in their right context" (as stated by Ibnul-Qayyim), it will be wise to avoid all the above-mentioned reasons of weakness and division; understand the fundamentals of this religion; determine the priorities of public discourse; consider the practical circumstances and new develop ments; and pursue all the factors of success when addressing the Muslims, inside and outside the Islamic world, as well as non-Muslims.

"Good instruction" entails the use of every possible way of persuasion (e.g. deterring, preaching, argument, tolerant invitation, etc.). For example, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Go, both of you (O Mûsâ [i.e. Moses] and Hârûn [i.e. Aaron]), to Fir'awn (i.e. Pharaoh), (because) indeed, he has transgressed. And speak to him with gentle speech that he may accept admonition or fear (Allah).***﴾ [Tâ-Hâ: 43, 44]

The "argument in a way that is best" means to hold dialogue with the other, whether Muslim or non-Muslim, tolerantly, gently and, more importantly, objectively and logically. Many models of this are found in the Glorious Qur'ân. For example, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***And if you (O Muhammad) asked them, "Who has created the heavens and earth?" they would surely say, "Allah.***﴾ [Luqmân (The Sage): 25]

﴿***And he (i.e. man) puts forth for Us an example and forgets his (own) creation. He says, "Who will give life to the bones after they are***

rotten into dust?" Say (O Muhammad), "They will be given life by He (i.e. Allah) Who created them the first time; and He is the All-Knower of all creation. ﴾ [Yâ-Sîn: 78, 79]

That way, we will have a perfect discourse with the best psychological and logical balance, one which prevents subjectivity and misdirection.

Features of Contemporary Islamic Discourse:

The current Islamic discourse has certain features, including:

1. A Shallow Approach:

It is wrongly believed by many scholars, reformers and even *Da'wah* activists that the Islamic discourse stands for religious discourse. In fact, it involves different types of discourse (political, economic, social, educational, media, etc.), which should all be delivered from the Islamic perspective.

This narrow perception accounts for the existing deficiency of Islamic discourse, prevents it from meeting the circumstantial needs of Muslim societies and gives an opportunity to other, alien discourses (e.g. secularist, communist and imperialist) to impose their views about the Muslim renaissance, while the Islamic discourse plays too limited a role or even no role at all. Thus, the problem is how to provide the doctrines of Islamic discourse with a more powerful presence in all aspects of modern life.

2. Lack of Technological Strategy:

The contemporary Islamic discourse has no clear strategy to cope with modern technological progress. The Western countries have gone far in scientific and technological development by virtue of their belief in science, high concern of securing the financial and technical requirements of scientific research and the creation of a knowledge-supporting environment. For them, science is a social norm and general commitment of the governments, organizations and citizens.

On the other hand, the Islamic discourse still considers natural sciences optional and inferior to the *Shar'î* sciences. Scholars and scientists are not given prominent position within society, the scientific findings are separated from practical life and scientific research receives inadequate funding.

In fact, seeking knowledge and scientific progress is an Islamic duty for Muslims to gain power, defend and support Islam and work for the goodness of humanity.

3. Failure to Stand Against Western Ideologies

To achieve its renaissance, the Western discourse focused on the concept of freedom as a framework for all activities of life in politics, economy, education, social life, etc. The contemporary Islamic discourse, however, is influenced by the notion of the "Big Brother", which entails having full control over people's behavior and thoughts. Those in authority believe they always understand better, are wise and able to decide and determine things in the name of public interest.

This contradicts the essence of Islam, which guarantees freedom of Muslims in all aspects of life. Freedom in Islam, in its absolute sense, is derived from the fact of belief in and submission to One Lord, which liberates all people from being controlled by the desires of wealth, power and superiority.

This contradiction provides enough opportunities for the Westernworld to try to impose the so-called "political reform" on our Muslim countries with the hidden purpose of having economic and geopolitical control in the name of freedom.

So, our duty is to identify the real significance of freedom in Islam and work out how to apply it correctly in the light of the changing nature of modern life and in accordance with the comprehensive Islamic perceptions of humankind, the universe and life.

4. Fractional Thinking

Because we do not understand the nature and importance of the *Ijtihâd* discourse, the general Islamic discourse is divided into multiple, separate ones (intellectual, political, economic, social, etc.). Personal opinions have become the determinants of the doctrinal background, difference of opinions is the mainstream and Muslims are divided into sects, parties and trends, each of which considers itself a better representative of Islam.

We have different priorities and viewpoints as well as controversial and sectarian disputes. We neglect the crucial issues of the nation such as the human values of freedom, justice, equality, human rights, citizenship, etc.

Internationally, we fail to prevent our disagreements from affecting the Muslim minorities living abroad and fail to introduce the true facts of Islam to them simply and accurately. This conflicting approach is used also

when addressing non-Muslims, which gives a false impression that there is more than one Islamic religion.

What the Islamic discourse really needs is to decide on one reference, specific priorities and unified thoughts when addressing the self as well as the other. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿ ***And thus We have made you a median (i.e. just) nation that you will be witnesses over the people...*** ﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 143]

5. Lack of Initiative:

The contemporary Islamic discourse is marked by a lack of positive action. It is mostly a nervous, sarcastic and nostalgic discourse with a special orientation to the past. Moreover, it is an unspecific discourse that sends indefinite messages to indefinite audiences. This contradicts the real Islamic Message which addresses the Muslim individual with specific instructions, prohibitions, responsibilities and virtues.

The true Muslim is required to be positive, providing voluntary help, charity and advice for others. When such duties are neglected, they are undertaken instead by the nongovernmental, secular and foreign organizations, who have different agendas than those of the Islamic discourse.

Therefore, our job is to make Islamic discourse fulfill an effective role in people's lives, supporting the practical influence of religion and the sense of responsibility among Muslims for the good and well-being of each other.

6. Inattention to Certain Social Groups:

The contemporary Islamic discourse pays little attention to such groups as children, adolescents, women and certain professions. This negatively affects the morale of the Muslim community, which has become unable, or even unwilling, to develop and has a pessimistic and defeatist approach to the world. Although such groups are given the highest concern by Islam and entitled to psychological, moral and educational care, the current Islamic discourse is not attentive enough towards them. They do not enjoy good religious education and advice, which renders them unaware of their *Shar'î* rights and duties and vulnerable to the "cultural invasion" coming from the West. It is a must to produce effective programs designed for women, children and adolescents with adequate funding, qualification and numbers of *Da'wah* personnel.

7. Lack of Systematization:

Our contemporary discourse needs to adopt a scientific methodology of work (planning, data collection, setting goals and strategies, coordinated implementation, evaluation and follow-up). It is severely short of the funds necessary for research and survey.

8. Inefficiency with the Other:

Here are some reasons why the Islamic discourse is not so effective when addressing the other:

- It is underlain by diverse views and austere approaches which do not reflect the simplicity and moderation of Islam.
- It keeps a reactive position, focusing largely on defending Islam gainst the accusations of terrorism while not doing much to clarify its sublime principles and universal values.
- Many people involved in cross-culture dialogue are poorly aware of the culture of 'the other' and any related circumstances.
- Dialogue is limited particularly to the official circles, although engaging other parties such as scholars, thinkers, reformers, politicians, media workers and social activists would be more beneficial.

Conclusion:

Inconsistency with the basic features of Islamic discourse, whether *Shar'î* or *Ijtihâd*, has resulted in deficiencies in the contemporary Islamic discourse and minimized its effectiveness. Introducing a modernized discourse based on the constants of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* and adapted to the new events and conditions is a collective obligation for all Muslims. It can reinforce the intrinsic features of the Islamic nation in the face of the internal and external challenges and can build general awareness of the self and the other.

Religious Discourse and Contemporary Reality

Dr. Muhammad As-Sammâk(*)

Two basic principles, acquaintance and dialogue, in the Islamic culture emerge from the concept of freedom that is stressed in the Noble Qur'ân. These principles also entail the existence of the "other", who has a different ethnicity, culture, religion and doctrine, and requires admittance of his existence and respect of his different opinion. Freedom as bestowed by Allah upon man is an aspect of dignity that Allah privileged him with.

Introduction:

The cultural, political and economic changes that the modern world faces impose new challenges on the interests, religions and cultures of nations and peoples, especially the Islamic world.

Muslims all over the world are concerned with encountering, understanding and adapting with these variables. This is because Islam, as a message, is a call to the way of Allah with wisdom and good admonition; it is presented openly to mankind and will remain so till the Day of Judgment.

(*) A journalistic writer ... (Lebanon).

Islam in its core is a global message to all mankind; it is not exclusive to Arabs alone. However, Islam fully recognizes Christianity and Judaism as two divine messages from Allah.

In its dogmatic perspective, Islam expresses a firm belief in Allah, the One God, as preached by the entire line of prophecy, starting from Abraham, then Moses, Jesus, Isaac, Jacob and all the Prophets and Messengers, and ending with the seal of the Prophets, Muhammad (PBUH). The universality of religion in Islam is plainly confirmed in the Noble Qur'ân (the source if Islamic legislation) in many places. I quote three of them below:

The first reference is represented in the first verse of Sura of An-Nisâ' (Women), in which Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***O mankind, fear your Lord, who created you from one soul (i.e. Adam)...***﴾ [An-Nisâ' (Women):1]

This establishes equality among all mankind, irrespective of their ethnicity, color, religion or dogma. All people –without exception – are created from one soul (Adam).

The second reference is to be found in the verse (70) of Sura of Al-Isrâ', in which Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***And We have certainly honored the children of Adam...***﴾ [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 70]

In this verse, the Divine honor is given to all mankind, regardless of their ethnic affinity, religion, civilization or nationality.

The third reference is represented in the verse (107) of Sura of Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets). In this verse Allah, Exalted be He, addressing His Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by saying:

﴿***And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.***﴾ [Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets): 107]

"To the worlds," this means to all people all over the world, not just toyour people, i.e., the Arabs.

Being a universal message, Islam derives its principles from the absolute equality between all mankind as they are created from one single soul, honored by Allah, made as His (vicegerent) on earth, and privileged with an exalted position above many of Allah's creatures, even the Angels.

However, in the present time, Islam faces many distortions and charges. Not only is this due to the foes of Islam whose enmity is spurred by

ignorance, but it is also due to the role played by a minority of Muslims who adopt some misconceptions about Islam and present them as the real image of this religion.

Hence, the need for the international community to understand the basic fundamentals of Islam concerning the bases of the call, determining its relationships with others and crystallizing the contour of its dealings with the others (non-Muslims) is highly pressing.

The present study is intended to discuss this question.

1. Freedom of Man in Islam:

The Islamic Encyclopedia has defined the concept "freedom" as the ability to choose between the various possibilities that embody the aspects of humanity to man. (1)

The International Arabic Encyclopedia has defined 'freedom' as the state in which a person can freely choose, decide and act according to his/her own will without any kind of pressure. (2)

This is a general definition of the concept of "freedom", but in the domain of religion, the meaning of freedom requires further explanation.

The Glorious Qur'ân is the first source of Islamic thought and legislation. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿***And had your Lord willed, those on earth would have believed - all of them entirely. Then, [O Muhammad], would you compel the people in order that they become believers?***﴾ [Yûnus (Jonah): 99]

Allah, Exalted be He, also says:

﴿***There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

In this verse, the word "no" is not a command for prohibition (i.e., it does not mean: do not force people to become Muslims), but "no" here represents the absolute negation (which means, no true faith, creed or religion can come about by compulsion).

Therefore, in reporting the speech of Prophet Hûd (PBUH) whom Allah sent as a bringer of good tidings and a guide to his people, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

(1) The Concise Islamic Encyclopedia, (Aleppo, Dâr Sihâr, 1997).
(2) The International Arabic Encyclopedia (Riyadh, 1996).

﴿***He said, "O my people have you considered: if I should be upon clear evidence from my Lord while He has given me mercy from Himself but it has been made hidden to you, should we force it upon you while you are averse to it?*** ﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd):28]

These glorious verses exhibit the inherent concept of freedom in the Islamic creed. Religion is not the nominal belief of a person that he is obliged to hold; but it is what is firmly inculcated in the heart because true religion is that which is active in the heart, as Ibn Al-Anbârî said, "What a person is forced to do, is not true religion." Likewise, whoever is forced to be a disbeliever (with regard to his outward actions), is not a disbeliever.

However, the questions that arise here are:

- Is there a difference between freedom of religion and freedom of belief?
- Is there a difference between freedom of belief and freedom of thought?
- What are the limits that discriminate between the realm of man's duties in his worldly life, and the religious duties for the Hereafter, which result from this freedom?
- Where do the limits of the legal rights of a person end, and where do the limits of his duties before Allah alone, Exalted be He, begin?

Basically Allah has perfected the creation of the human soul and inspired it with discernment to be able to recognize the two paths, one leading to its wickedness and the other to its righteousness. Then, Allah gave man freedom to choose between the two paths on the condition that he would be questioned by Allah, and depending on his deeds he would be punished or rewarded on the Day of Judgment.

Allah did not give anybody the right to judge the belief or disbelief of other people. Judgment of people regarding their different dogmas is a Divine matter, not a human one. This is because man, whatever his creed may be, is only part of one party; and if one is in one party, he can never be a judge. Judgment belongs to Allah alone. Any party that assumes the right to act as a deputy of Allah and passes judgments about people in His Name, changes the course of his cause from striving for the sake of Allah to being

against Allah. High is Allah above assigning any body as a deputy to talk on His behalf, except, of course, Prophets and Messengers.

Freedom is essentially a gift from Allah to man, and whatever Allah grants, no one can prevent. The principle of freedom, which Allah, Exalted be He, wills and determines, is aimed to regulate human life. This principle is closely associated with the principle of accountability. Depriving the people of the right of freedom is contradictory to the Divine Will, and holding people accountable to each other on account of the choices they take is also inconsistent with the Divine Will. So, Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿***O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female, and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another...***﴾ [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

I will elaborate on the principle of acquaintance later, but now we have to point out that acquaintance usually occurs between two or more parties who hold different opinions and perspectives. Difference between people is just a manifestation of their various choices and views. Thus, this variance is a direct outcome of their practice of freedom.

In the Glorious Qur'ân Allah declared to mankind that He made them into 'peoples and tribes' in order that ﴿***you may know one another***﴾, but not that you may be unified in one creed or under the banner of one faith.

In other words, Allah's Wisdom is that people may ponder over the different opinions of one another and respect each other's free choice. Accordingly, mutual recognition of one another leads to mutual understanding, mutual dialogue and mutual respect. Ultimately, Allah, Exalted be He, will judge among people on the Day of Reckoning regarding what they differ about.

The Divine Wisdom is explained by two significant verses (118-119) of Sura of Hûd. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***And if your Lord had willed, He could have made mankind one community; but they will not cease to differ. Except whom your Lord has given mercy, and for that He has created them...***﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd):118, 119]

This means that Allah's Will did not destine the creation of mankind to be one single community, but different, distinguished communities and

peoples. It also means even if they were made one community, they would not cease to differ except whom your Lord has spared from being involved in disputes. Therefore, we learn that Allah created mankind with this inherent disposition, namely, to be different communities and peoples, but they are encouraged to become acquainted with one other.

The principle of difference is based on the rule established by verse (67) of Sura of Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage) where Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***For every nation We have appointed rites which they perform. So, [O Muhammad], let them [i.e. the disbelievers] not contend with you over the matter, but invite them to your Lord. Indeed, you are upon straight guidance.***﴾ [Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage):67]

This is the same principle as confirmed by verse (48) of Sura of Al-Mâ'idah (The Table) where Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***...To each of you We prescribed a law and a method. Had Allah willed, He would have made you one nation [united in religion], but [He intended] to test you in what He has given you; so race to [all that is] good...***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 48]

The variety of rites in the first verse as well as the variety of laws and methods in the second verse naturally lead to a variety of approaches of belief in Allah, the One God. Consequently, it brings about variation in cultures, beliefs, traditions and customs.

Because freedom in Islam is a fundamental pillar, the Qur'ân announces the features of the mission of the Messengers in a way that prescribes the avoidance of compulsion. The underpinning characteristics of these missions are:

Firstly: Warning: ***This is reflected in the following verses:*** ﴿***And, [O Muhammad], warn the people...***﴾ [Ibrâhîm (Abraham): 44]

﴿***And warn, [O Muhammad], your closest kindred.***﴾ [Ash-Shu'arâ' (The Poets): 214]

﴿***... Warn your people...***﴾ [Nûh (Noah): 1]

﴿***Arise and warn.***﴾"} [Al-MuddaThir (The Shrouded): 2]

﴿***And We send not the messengers except as bringers of good tidings and warners...***﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 48]

﴾***Indeed, We have sent you, [O Muhammad], with the truth as a bringer of good tidings and a warner...***﴿ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 119]

Secondly: Admonition: ***The Qur'ân says:***

﴾***Verily, this is an admonition: therefore whosoever will, let him take a path to his Lord.***﴿ [Al-Muzzammil (The Enwrapped): 19]

﴾***Nay, verily, this Qur'ân is an admonition. So whosoever will (let him read it) and receive admonition (from it)!***﴿ [Al-MuddaThir (The Shrouded):54, 55]

Note the term "whoever wills" in these two verses.

Thirdly: Notification: ***Allah, Exalted be He, says:***

﴾***And obey Allah and obey the Messenger and beware. And if you turn away - then know that upon Our Messenger is only [the responsibility for] clear notification.***﴿ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 92]

﴾***And if they submit [in Islam], they are rightly guided; but if they turn away - then upon you is only the [duty of] notificati on...***﴿ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 20]

﴾***Not upon the Messenger is [any responsibility] except [that of] notification...***﴿ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 99]

﴾***...Upon you is only the [duty of] notification, and upon Us is the account.***﴿ [Ar-Ra'd (Thunder): 40]

Fourthly: Giving Glad Tidings: ***Allah says:***

﴾***And give good tidings to those who believe and do righteous deeds that they will have gardens [in Paradise]...***﴿ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 25]

﴾***And give good tidings to the believers that they will have from Allah a great bounty.***﴿ [Al-Ahzâb (The Allied Parties): 47]

Fifthly: Reminding: ***Allah says:***

﴾***And remind, for indeed, the reminder benefits the believers.***﴿ [Adh-Dhâriyât (The Winnowers): 55]

﴾***...But remind by the Qur'ân whoever fears My threat.***﴿ [Qâf: 45]

﴾ ***So remind, [O Muhammad]; you are only a reminder.***﴿ [Al-Ghâshiyah (The Enveloper): 21]

In the light of the duties of Messengers, it becomes clear that Islam utterly rejects any coercion in embracing the faith, and it respects man's freedom of choice. Thus, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾***Say, "O mankind, the truth has come to you from your Lord,so whoever is guided is only guided for [the benefit of] hissoul, and whoever goes astray only goes astray [in violation]against it. And I am not over you a controller.***﴿ [Yûnus (Jonah):108]

Allah, also, says:

﴾***Indeed, We sent down to you the Book for the people in truth.So whoever is guided - it is for [the benefit of] his soul; and whoever goes astray only goes astray to its detriment. And you are not a manager [i.e. controller] over them.***﴿ [Az-Zumar (The Hordes): 41]

Also, He, Glory be to Him, says:

﴾***...Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of he who strays from His way, and He is most knowing of he who is guided.***﴿ [An-Najm (The Star): 30]

Indeed, the one who follows the path of guidance reaps the fruit of adhering to it, while the person who fails to follow guidance becomes vulnerable to punishment. So, both are responsible for the outcome of their free choice, whether guidance or misguidance. Consequently, s/he is responsible for this choice before Allah, Exalted be He, on the Day of Resurrection.

The principle of freedom as expressed in the Glorious Qur'ân, establishes two basic rules, namely, acquaintance and dialogue, which are intrinsic qualities of the Islamic culture. Moreover, this requires, as it will be explained later, the existence of "the other", who may have different ethnicity, culture, religion or dogma. It also requires recognition of his existence and respect of his contesting view. Freedom, as bestowed by Allah upon man, is nothing but a manifestation of the dignity with which Allah distinguished him.

2. The Human Dignity:

The religious writings inform us that man at the very beginning of his creation lived in Paradise, which was marked with abiding pleasure. But after falling into aberration and committing a sin which was followed by repentance, a worldly life for man was prepared. This life is based on certain rules that can be summarized in the following Qur'anic Texts:

First, man is not accountable for a sin other than what he committed. Hence, one is not born bearing any original sin, but he is born according to the Natural Disposition *(fitrah)*. That is, one is created inherently wanting to search for Allah and with an innate belief in Him. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***...And every soul does not earn [blame] except [if it is] against itself, and no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another...***﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 164]

Also Allah says:

﴿***...And whoever errs only errs against it. And no bearer of burdens will bear the burden of another...***﴾ [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 15]

Second, man is Allah's vicegerent on earth. This position is significant as it reflects the highest rank of Divine Honor that was invested in man. This is revealed in the following verse where Allah says:

﴿***And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels."Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." They said, "Will You place upon it one who causes corruption therein and sheds blood, while we declare Your praise and sanctify You?" He [Allah] said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know.***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 30]

Third, as man is Allah's vicegerent on earth, He [Allah] subjugated many things for him. So, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***...that Allah had made subject to you whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth...***﴾ [Luqmân (The Sage): 20]

Also He, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿ ***It is Allah who created the heavens and the earth and sent down rain from the sky and produced thereby some fruits as provision for you and subjected for you the ships to sail through the sea by His command***

and subjected for you the rivers. And He subjected for you the sun and the moon, continuous [in orbit], and subjected for you the night and the day. And He gave you from all you asked of Him. And if you should count the favor [i.e. blessings] of Allah, you could not enumerate them. Indeed, mankind is [generally] most unjust and ungrateful. ﴾ [Ibrâhîm (Abraham): 32-34]

This means that Allah has made the laws of nature to be subjugated for man's welfare, so that he may fulfill the requirements of his mission as a vicegerent of Allah on Earth. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***...He has produced you from the earth and settled you in it...***﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 61]

The inhabitation of Earth and its subjection for the welfare of man is one of the requirements of Allah's vicegerency. However, its destruction and devastation contradict this aim.

Fourth, the vice-regency of Allah is a trust and a great responsibility. Carrying out judgment among people, namely kingship, is a trust. Fulfillment the rights of this world, namely the environment, is also a trust.

This is indicated in Allah's saying:

﴿***Indeed, we offered the Trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, and they declined to bear it and feared it; but man [undertook to] bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant.*** ﴾ [Al-Ahzâb (The Allied Parties):72]

Fifth, Allah, Exalted be He, has created man with the faculty to comprehend worldly knowledge. Allah, Glory be to Him, says: ﴿***And He taught Adam the names - all of them...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow):31]

Thereupon, Allah, Glory be to Him, urges man to ponder over His creatures, himself, and the universe around him, so that he may realize that the scope of knowledge is endless and its horizons are wide. Man should realize that his intellect may have encompassed some discoveries in different fields of knowledge, yet there are more branches of knowledge he should think about and develop. Allah says:

﴿***...And you [i.e. mankind] have not been given of knowledge except a little.*** ﴾ [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 85]

He, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***...but over every possessor of knowledge is one [more] knowing.*** ﴾ [Yûsuf (Joseph): 76]

Sixth, Allah has created man in the most perfect nature. He, Glory be to Him, says: ﴿***We have certainly created man in the best of stature.***﴾ [At-Tîn (The Fig): 4]

He, Glory be to Him, has also fashioned man in a perfect form, as He says: ﴿***...And formed you and perfected your forms...***﴾ [At-Taghâbun (Mutual Fraud): 3]

He fashioned man from a single living cell, with its genes and each part carrying out its specific functions, till it reached the state of a full human being with an intellect by which man can venture the horizons of knowledge and develop the ability to innovate and deduce proofs. Allah, Exalted be He, says: ﴿***And We have certainly honored the children of Adam and carried them on the land and sea, and provided for them...***﴾ [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 70]

This honor which Allah gives man and is mentioned in the Qur'an is a tribute to his humanity as well as to his role as vicegerent of Allah. Allah has preferred man, as He says:

﴿ ***...And preferred them over much of what We have created, with [definite] preference.***﴾ [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 70]

Man has been given a higher position even over the angels, whose sole obligation is to worship Allah, which is clearly shown in Allah's command to them to prostrate themselves before Adam (the human being). One of the obvious manifestations of this honorable status of man is the gift of knowledge that Allah, Exalted be He, bestowed upon man in preference to the angels. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿ ***And He taught Adam the names - all of them. Then He showed them to the angels and said, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful." They said, "Exalted are You; we have no knowledge except what You have taught us. Indeed, it is You who is the Knowing, the Wise." He said, "O Adam, inform them of their names." And when he had informed them of their names, He said, "Did I not tell you that I know the unseen [aspects] of the heavens and the earth? And I know what you reveal and what you have concealed.***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 31-33]

Allah, Exalted be He, has granted man some of the elements of knowledge. Knowledge is, in itself, one of the Divine Attributes. Without some of these elements of knowledge man cannot achieve the mission of vice-regency of Allah on earth. One of these elements or attributes is that man should observe

and control his actions in accordance with the manner explained by Abû Hâmid Al-Ghazâlî (died in 1111 A.D.) in his book "The Revival of the Religious Sciences": that man should judge his own deeds and intentions, edging towards the example of the Prophet (PBUH) who said:

«*Indeed, (the correctness and rewards of) deeds depend upon intentions.*»

Man should also be heedful of the fact that Allah watches him at all times. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴾***He knows the secret and what is [even] more hidden***﴿ [Tâ-Hâ: 7]

Actually, the Noble Qur'ân includes many verses that underline and value man's intellect. It addresses people "who have reason", people "who have knowledge", and people "who give thought". Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾***Do they not contemplate within themselves? Allah has not created the heavens and the earth and what is between them except in truth and for a specified term...***﴿ [Ar-Rûm (The Romans): 8]

﴾***So let man observe from what he was created.***﴿ [At-Târiq (The Night Visitant): 5]

﴾ ***Say, "Observe what is in the heavens and earth." But of no avail will be the signs and warners to a people who do not believe.***﴿ [Yûnus (Jonah): 101]

﴾***So have they not traveled through the earth and have hearts by which to reason...***﴿ [Al-Hajj (The Pilgrimage): 46]

﴾***Do they not look into the realm of the heavens and the earth and everything that Allah has created...***﴿ [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 185]

﴾***Then do they not look at the camels - how they are created? And at the sky - how it is raised? And at the mountains – how they are erected? And at the earth - how it is spread out?***﴿ [Al-Ghâshiyah (The Enveloper): 17-20]

﴾***And no one will be reminded except those of understanding***﴿ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân):7]

When Allah, Exalted be He, subjected to man whatever is in the heavens and whatever is in the earth, this means that man occupies a superior position than the natural elements, i.e. man is superior in Allah's Sight to the sun, which men of ancient times used to glorify to the extent of worshipping it. Man is also superior to the moon, fire, wind and other ephemeral, cosmic phenomena.

Moreover, when Allah sets a direct relationship between Himself and man, declares accountability of man's actions in the Hereafter (by rewarding or punishing) as His Own Task, holds man responsible for his choices and actions in this world by giving him free will, and assigns him a arbitrator over his deeds and intentions, Allah thus raises his position, honors him and favors him over many of His creatures.

These distinctive privileges are sufficient to free man from blind dependence and exalt him to being absolutely obedient to Allah, using his reason, knowledge and free will. Allah, Glory be to Him, says: ﴿***Are those who know equal to those who do not know?***﴾ [Az-Zumar (The Hordes): 9]

﴿***...Only those fear Allah, from among His servants, who have knowledge...***﴾ [Fâtir (The Originator): 28]

Belief in Allah in Islam is yet another manifestation of Allah honoring man. It is not an inherited tendency that is attained through birth or merely through a procedure of symbolic rituals. Rather, this belief is an utterly personal, free choice to submit to Allah, as He says:

﴿***...so whoever wills - let him believe; and whoever wills – let him disbelieve...***﴾ [Al-Kahf (The Cave): 29]

Belief in Allah cannot be maintained by force, as Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion. The right course has become clear from the wrong...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

The word "no" here - as we have explained above - is not a proscription (i.e., it does not mean 'do not force people to be Muslims'), but it is an expression of negation (which means, 'there is no faith obtained by compulsion').

The freedom of man that Allah granted him is crystallized in the self. This freedom is implicitly revealed in the first pillar of Islam, i.e., the declaration of faith: "I testify that there is no true God but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger." This declaration means, "I, a human being, bear witness that I believe and testify that there is no true God but Allah and that Muhammad is His Messenger." So, belief is not inherited and is not a favor or a forced duty, but it is guidance from Allah, as Allah says:

﴿***...Allah guides to His light whom He wills...***﴾ [An-Nûr (The Light): 35]

It is a guidance that enlightens the mind of man and leads him to recognize and believe in Allah.

The vision of Islam, with regard to man's honor and the accountability of his deeds before Allah, which greatly boost his dignity, rejects any mediation between Allah and man. It dismisses any authority upon man's faith in this world other than his free will. Then, in the Hereafter, Allah, Exalted be He, will be the ultimate authority and judge over him, whether to reward or punish him. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***And whoever invokes besides Allah another deity for which he has no proof - then his account is only with his Lord. Indeed, the disbelievers will not succeed. And, [O Muhammad], say, "My Lord, forgive and have mercy, and You are the best of the merciful.***﴾ [Al-Mu'minûn (The Believers):117, 118]

Also He, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***And say, "The truth is from your Lord, so whoever wills – let him believe; and whoever wills - let him disbelieve...***﴾ [Al-Kahf (The Cave):29]

Nationalism played, and is still playing, a vital role in dismantling empires. When the former American, Woodrow Wilson, declared the principle of autonomy in Versailles, his Foreign Secretary, Robert Lansing, foresaw the possible threat that this principle was likely to pose and said, "This principle is loaded with dynamite because it raises unachievable hopes." Lansing also said in his memoirs, "I am afraid that autonomy will cost the lives of thousands of victims."

In fact, in Europe alone, hundred of thousands of victims have fallen in a bid to achieve autonomy, from Ireland in the West to Chechnya in the East, including Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the Spanish Basque Region and the French Island of Corsica.

Freedom, with its meaning of respect and recognition of existence of ***the other***, in the former Soviet Union and the former Union of Yugoslavia, was not existent to be a common thread that gathered pearls. The centrality of absolute authority, with its practice of suppression and oppression, was the force that subdued ***the other***. As soon as that authority disappeared, national groups emerged everywhere, exactly like a flower sprouting from a cleavage in a rock.

In 1916, the English and French envoys, Sikes and Picot, laid down the political borders between most of the Arab countries. The political

borders, as they stand now between many countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America, represent the legacy of the imperial powers and their feverish conflicts for control and sovereignty.

Just as the current political borders do not contribute to the national interests of the Arabs, the borders between the third world countries do not duly take into consideration the question of race, tribal belongings, or religious beliefs of the people.

Misjudging the interests and requirements of the minorities living in these countries will result in a collapse of social integration, which has already happened in Angola, Rwanda, Somalia, Congo and other countries in Africa. Moreover, the case of East Timor and the Islands of Maluku in Indonesia, as well the volatile situation in Kashmir in India indicate that any disregard of the other's individuality and entity can lead to a drastic shift from a rightful demand of self discrimination to a legal claim for full independence.

The Charter of the Nations League, the Charter of the United Nations, the law of human rights, the law of minorities as well as the permanent international court for criminals of war override the political authority and conventional paths that lead to the independence of states. They render any infringement upon the distinctive cultural or religious traits of any people a violation of international law, resulting in the intervention of the international community.

But it is necessary to put an end to violations of the rights of minorities in different areas in the world. Not only will this serve as a direct protection of the rights of people and states, but it will also maintain peace and security of other societies in the area as well. These societies are directly affected by negative consequences of these violations that may ruin their national stability and security.

The term 'freedom' no longer means, as it used to be in the past, emancipation from suppression or oppression, but it has gained a new sense that centers on self-realization. This means that individuals specifically and people generally seek to maintain their identity and attain self-realization by liberating themselves from all hindrances that block their achievement of self-realization.

Accordingly, the definition of the term "freedom" overturns the old definitions and has become more complex and has more implications. The

question that arises here is what are the particular values that determine the criteria for self-realization of men and societies? Which authority is invested with the capability of deciding these values and of judging whether such values deserve respect or whether they merely reflect a transgression of the rights of others?

The Western powers are keen on spreading and disseminating their values among other nations in order to be the prevailing example which will decide the success or failure of these nations, inasmuch as they adhere to or disregard this example.

These Western powers derive their domination from their cultural hegemony and their domination of the media, such as TV, the Internet and other modern methods of communication.

However, many nations refuse to embrace all the Western values, as they have a strong affiliation to their own values and national cultural heritage.

Consequently, in such a situation the two parties find themselves in an inevitable conflict for the preservation of their values. This conflict involves the wide use of defamation and distortion of each other's values without considering certain rights.

One of these rights is the unity of the national fabric of many nations that resist dissolution into the Western culture. Hence, there appears a controversial question concerning the relationship between the importance of the preservation of the unity of the national fabric on the one side and the necessity of the protection of freedom of the various parties that constitute the fabric on the other.

Foreign instigation may succeed in penetrating the national fabric if three essential conditions exist:

First, the absence of freedom in the society, which provides the justification for foreign intervention.

Second, the propagation of ambitious principles, values and ideas which meet the aspirations of the suppressed people to obtain selfrealization.

Third, a positive response to foreign intervention, which is considered a gateway to get rid of the state of interior suffocation.

Though foreign intervention may have a certain agenda and is seen as ill-intentioned, with regard to how it is both instigated and manipulated, the interior incapacity to protect and disseminate freedom is no less evil than foreign intervention.

Human beings have taken long steps to reach the modern idea of freedom. At the beginning of the 20th century, freedom was an exclusive right for a special class of people. For instance, only four American States, Utah, Idaho, Colorado and Wyoming, acknowledged the right of women to vote. The Americans had to struggle till 1920 to endorse article 19 of the constitution which gives women the right to vote. Then, they had to struggle again till 1965 to ratify the law of election, which gave the white and the black equal rights in voting.

The Islamic legislation is based on the Noble Qur'ân, the Prophetic Traditions and reason, as long as the latter corroborates the Islamic texts through the consensus of opinion, analogical deduction, presumption of continuity, general interest of the public and juristic preference. *Sharî'ah* law underlined the importance of many aspects that protect human dignity, such as equality among people and the right of a safe life. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿***...And do not kill the soul which Allah has forbidden [to be killed] except by [legal] right...***﴾ [Al-An'âm (Cattle): 151]

Allah, Glory be to Him, protects the life of human beings. He, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***...Whoever kills a soul - unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely...***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 32]

A thousand years before the declaration of Jean Jacques Rousseau that man is born free, 'Umar Ibnul-Khattâb (may Allah be pleased with him) delivered his well-known statement in his message to 'Amr Ibn Al-'Âs, "How did you dare enslave people while they were born free?!!"

Juristic *Ijtihâd* (individual reasoning and discretion) is one of the most prominent ways of respecting human dignity as it allows freedom of thought and a quest for the truth. The Prophet (PBUH) encouraged *Ijtihâd* by stating the fact, (Everyone will find it easy to practice such *Ijtihâd* that will lead him to what he was created for)[1].

This is a general rule that is valid for all societies and at all times. Thus, *Imâm* Mâlik, may Allah have mercy on him, rejected to agree to the idea of imposing his *Fiqhî* School, which was favored by Hârûn Ar-Rashîd,

(1) According to what is related by Al-Bukhârî, and narrated by 'Alî, may Allah have mercy on him, that the Prophet (PBUH) said: *"Everyone will find it easy to do such deeds that will lead him to what he was created for."*.

on the people. *Imâm* Mâlik justified his rejection by expressing his aversion of restricting the freedom of *Ijtihâd*. The conduct of the just Caliph, 'Umar Ibnul-Khattâb, may Allah have mercy on him, concerning the well-known case of stating the value of a woman's dowry, confirms the right to free *Ijtihâd*. He retreated from his wrong *Ijtihâd* and declared, "A woman hit the nail on the head, but 'Umar erred."

In Islam, human freedom is respected much, even with regard to the permissibility of differing in the exegesis of some verses of the Glorious Qur'ân. In this case, the controversy does not lie in the Holy Text, but it lies in the difference of human understanding of the text. It is a permissible controversy among exegetes and *Mujtahids* (scholars who perform *Ijtihâd*) about different implications that can be deduced from the same text.

Hence, different religious schools have been established, which represent a healthy phenomenon of a society that respects the mental faculty of man, his dignity and his right to deduce legal rulings within the framework of reason, and religious and scientific perspectives.

The miracle of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is the Noble Qur'ân, a divine text which is open to many forms of interpretation and suitable to the nature of the human intellect, which develops new meanings according to different times and places.

Islam respectfully addresses the human mind. It relies on logic in refuting the principles of polytheism in order to emancipate man from idolatry and convince him to worship Allah, the Only True God. Islam does not follow the path of spreading religion by the sword. But it used this path only to defend the life and the creed of the Muslims.

Accordingly, it should be noted that the Divine Honor of man that is mentioned in the Noble Qur'ân is absolute, irrespective of man's belief or race. So, human dignity is a result of Allah's Will and encompasses all people, regardless of their nationality, color, language or belief. Allah is not the Lord of the Jews alone, or the Christians alone, or the Muslims alone; He is the Lord of all the Worlds.

Conclusion

In May 2003, the Supreme Council of the Islamic Affairs held a conference in Egypt under the title, "The future of the Islamic *Ummah* (Nation)", which reflected great concern about the future of this *Ummah*. It also indicated the need to refresh and reshape Islamic thought so as to stem from the fundamentals of faith that are related to the sources of the Islamic *Sharî'ah* (the Noble Qur'ân and the Prophetic Traditions).

The conference underlined the following important points:

First, the mission of reform begins with recognition of faults and points of weaknesses through self-criticism and a constant reflection on negative aspects.

Second, adherence to the Islamic culture, which calls for a serious dialogue among equals and coexistence with the other, in the light of international law and mutual interests.

Third, adoption of the principles of justice, fraternity, co-operation for the prevalence of righteousness and piety, prevalence of the principle of consultation (*Shûrâ*) in its modern and developed forms as well as at all levels in the Islamic world, involvement of Muslims in defending their wealth, and fighting all forms of backwardness.

Fourth, the necessity of encountering and defeating fanatic misconceptions that narrow-mindedly restrict Islam to merely the fulfillment of rituals and observation of acts of worship; these misconceptions spread the spirit of *Tawâkul* (dependence) and negative thoughts that jeopardize progress, development and the attainment of the means of power and deterrence.

Fifth, the need to overcome unfruitful disputes that weaken the Islamic *Ummah* and harm its interests.

Sixth, the necessity for Muslims to adhere to the Islamic precepts that push the society forward towards progress, including the awareness of the value of time, hard work and the close compatible relationship between knowledge and labor, and between theory and practice.

Seventh, awareness of the contemporary international changes in the modern world, and their impact on the Islamic *Ummah*.

Eighth, awareness that inhabitation of the earth, entailing the prosperity and uplifting of the conditions of the Muslims, is an Islamic duty and a Divine obligation not less significant than other duties.

Ninth, Realization that defending the Islamic *Ummah* requires exerting efforts in the applied sciences and all sciences that are necessary to build economic and military power, with adherence to the great Islamic values which call for the prevalence of justice and the preparation of necessary power at all levels.

Tenth, Islam will not gain the required power and capability unless Muslims have a strong economic unity in order to be able to compete internationally.

Following this, an Islamic Summit was held in Malaysia in October, 2003. This conference reflected the Muslims' concern about their present and future; in a situation in which they seemed like an easy prey for other nations. Unfortunately, although Muslims are a multitude, they are as weak as the foam that is carried down by a torrent. Hence, this anxiety motivated the conference to take a step forward in the culture and media sphere to correct the negative stereotyped images about Islam and Muslims. To make this mission a success in the foreign countries, it should be, first of all, realized in the Islamic World.

From this stand, the importance of practicing self-criticism emerged, leading to an open mind towards the whole world which must be based on the rules of the general principles that determine the relationship between Muslims and the other. The most important of these principles, which are the object of concentration in the present study, are freedom, dialogue, moderation, open mind towards the other and dealing with them with respect, and acquaintance between nations and peoples that have different customs, culture, language and religion.

Before Being Beset with Our Mistakes

Prof. 'Umar 'Ubayd Hasanah (*)

Incriminating criticism constitutes the grave problem of discourse which has led to the absence of criticism, evaluation, review, reciprocal advice and innovation. Muslim discourse is a human effort that may contain some errors and, thus, needs criticism, review and evaluation according to the values of the Glorious Qur'ân and Sunnah.

The Importance of Discourse:

There may be no need to talk about the importance of discourse and its role in forming the pan-Muslim nation, reviving its effectiveness, changing its status quo, establishing its civilization, rectifying its course, maturing its mind, reading its heritage well, renewing the landmarks of its life, formulating its terminology, having a good vision of its future and securing it so as to protect its identity and existence.

Scrutinizing the circumstances surrounding the existence of the Muslim nation, we will find that the discourse (i.e. the Qur'ân) was the main reason behind making it the just (and the best) nation. Such a discourse is

(*) Head of Studies and Research Centre (Qatar).

the key means of reviving the Muslim nation and restoring its great civilization. Allah, the Almighty, says: ﴿*...That you will be witnesses over the people...*﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow):143]

The Muslim nation was formed through a "discourse". Its revelation started with some words of a "book". Its culture and civilization spread by means of a "book". Its eternal miracle is a "book" (i.e. the Glorious Qur'ân). The Muslim nation never unanimously agree upon an act of deviation as long as it observes the values of this "book". Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿*And hold firmly to the rope of Allah all together...*﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân):103]

The Prophet (PBUH) said: «*My nation does not [consensually] agree upon doing an act of deviation.*»[1]

The "book" has been one of the most important tools of the nation's *Jihâd* and endeavor. Moreover, the values of this "book" are the guide for the Muslim nation to achieve peace and the core of its production in all fields of culture and knowledge. Allah, the Most High, says:

﴿*So do not obey the disbelievers, and strive against them with it [i.e. the Qur'ân] a great striving.*﴾"} [Al-Furqân (The Criterion): 52]

He also says: ﴿*And you are not over them a tyrant. But remind by the Qur'ân whoever fears My threat.*﴾ [Qâf: 45]

We believe that material losses, no matter how severe they are, will not disable the nation's ability to regain its status as long as its values are taken from the Glorious Qur'ân and its sound discourse is preserved. In this regard, Allah, the Most Great, says:

﴿*But this is an honored Qur'ân. [Inscribed] in a Preserved Slate.*﴾ [Al-Burûj (The Constellations): 21-22]

This verse was mentioned in the Glorious Qur'ân after mentioning the terrible story of those who were tormented in the Ditch and after stating Fir'awn (Pharaoh) as an example of extreme injustice, tyranny and one who claimed divinity.

Moreover, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

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(1) Related by Ibn Mâjah.

﴿***So do not weaken and do not grieve, and you will be superior if you are [true] believers.***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 139]

This verse was revealed after the Muslims' bitter defeat in the Battle of Uhud.

This proves that Faith and adherence to the Glorious Qur'ân is a protection against weakness of civilization and a means of reviving the Nation. The disbelievers have recognized the great importance of the discourse (i.e. the Glorious Qur'ân) and its role in influencing and changing people. Therefore, they have spared no effort in making people confused and preventing them from knowing about the Qur'ân or conveying it to other people. Quoting the disbelievers, Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿***Do not listen to this Qur'ân and speak noisily during [the recitation of] it that perhaps you will overcome.***﴾ [Fussilat (Expounded) : 26]

Moreover, the disbelievers flee from listening to the Qur'ân. Describing such a state, the Qur'ân likens them to alarmed donkeys fleeing from a lion. In the light of the above, it is not strange that the core mission of the Prophethood is notification. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***...And there is upon the Messenger nothing except [the duty of] clear notification.***﴾ [Al-'Ankabût (The Spider): 18]

Notification (i.e. discourse) is considered as the means of regaining status, progress, protection and success. Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***Say, 'Indeed, none can protect me from Allah (punishment) [if I should disobey], nor will I find in other than Him a refuge. But only [upon me is the duty of] conveying (the truth) from Allah, and His messages...***﴾ [Al-Jinn (The Jinn): 22-23]

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«The one devoted to the Qur'ân will be asked [on the Day of Judgment]: 'Read, ascend [the degrees of Paradise] and recite as you used to recite in the worldly life, for your degree [in Paradise] will be determined according to the last verse you had read.»[1]

(1) Related by At-Tirmidhî. He deemed it as a *Hasan* (approved) and *Sahîh* (authentic) *Hadîth.*

Meanings of Terms:

It may be useful, in the introduction of this treatise, to indicate the importance of determining the concept or signification of some terms. I believe that this may help to uncover the truth, remove confusion and reach the required meaning. Terms, in general, are the main concepts of the nation's culture and the spotlights of its branches of knowledge. They are to culture like lexicons are to language. Furthermore, they constitute a state of intellectual and scientific maturity and represent the main factors that determine the scope of understanding and the required meaning.

Accordingly, the meaning of a term can be considered as the decisive criterion in case of confusion and contradiction.

Such importance of terms never means that terms limit the mind's ability of creativity and development. However, terms with accurate definitions constitute the mature steps and stable ground for the development of the mind and represent considerable room for understanding, interaction and establishing areas of mutual agreement. Thus, terms help to achieve the aims of dialogue due to the intensity, accuracy and preciseness they are characterized with. Without terms, those addressed in a dialogue will be like the deaf, and the dialogue will be a means of cultural misguidance. As I mentioned earlier, terms, in general, are the means of understanding, clarity and avoiding confusion, and the windows of knowledge.

Terms may be general, like cultural terms, or specialized, like scientific terms. Every branch of knowledge has its own terms. Likewise, each category of people has its specifically used terms and every researcher or intellectual has his own terms that constitute the components of his style and the keys to his understanding. Such terms prevent others from claiming that the researcher or the intellectual meant or said something that he never meant or said.

Nowadays, it is noticeable that a large number of civilized researchers, intellectuals and scholars begin their writings and research papers with a list containing the terms mentioned in the research along with the definition and usage of such terms, according to their points of views.

Accordingly, the readers know exactly what the researcher means. No one can deny that this is a civilized acts added to the account of such people.

Most of the intellectual and cultural problems may occur due to the fact that the term is immature or unclear, or that there is no consideration for the scientific and intellectual value and importance of the term when establishing the scope-determining factors, intellectual landmarks and the exchange of knowledge. That is because a term is an indicator of civilization and a cultural value that resembles good currency which is exchanged in the stock market.

Such an indicator of intellectual maturity can be found in our scholarly or cultural heritage during the eras of its brilliance and prosperity. In such eras, many terms emerged in various branches of knowledge, science and reason. Thus, every branch of discipline had its own terms that were considered the keys to understand such a branch. Furthermore, some books and lexicons explaining the special terminology of every branch of knowledge and art were also compiled.

Islam's Discourse and Muslim Discourse:

It may be useful to focus on the concept and indication of terms like "Islam's discourse", "Islamic discourse" and "Muslims' discourse".

The term "Islam's discourse" refers to the discourse of the Revelation with all its sayings, conditions, fields and contents with which it deals, and thus it is the infallible "discourse" that cannot be distorted by any falsehood.

As for other forms including intellectual, *Fiqhî* (jurisprudential) and scholarly production, and expression of all kinds of understanding and cognitive aspects, they represent the "Muslims' discourse", their *Ijtihâd* (legal reasoning and discretion) and their understanding when dealing with "Islam's discourse", represented by the Glorious Qur'ân, *Sunnah* and the Prophet's biography. It also represents peoples' effort to apply the Muslims' discourse at any time and in all places. Of course, the aforementioned production is a human source which is liable to mistakes and forgetfulness.

Here, we suggest that the term "Islam's discourse" should refer to the knowledge of the Revelation of the Qur'ân, *Sunnah*, and the Prophet's biography.

This discourse has its own characteristics and features with regard to the source of reception, methodology of conveyance, its infallibility and soundness and elements of its nature. Thus, it significantly and conceptually differs from the "Islamic discourse" and the "Muslims' discourse" – in the case of considering that the word "Islamic" does not refer to Islam but to the ascription of human "discourse" to Islamic values. Hence, Islamic

discourse differs from Islam's discourse concerning its characteristics and features of being a result of human *Ijtihâd* (legal reasoning and discretion), which is liable to rightness, error, review, discussion, evaluation, testing, modification and cancellation.

Therefore, the "Islamic discourse" is the human *Ijtihâd*-related product which is based on the values of Islam or "Islam's discourse".

For fear that "Islamic discourse", as a human product, may be confused with "Islam's discourse" as a Divine revelation, we suggest using the term "Muslims' discourse" as a substitute for "Islamic discourse", since its significance is clearer. This leads to the continuity of reconsideration, *Ijtihâd*, renewal and evaluation away from any misconceived sanctity, psychological barriers, and confusion between the saying of the legislator and that of the explainer. This is why we prefer using the term "Muslims' discourse" to the term "Islamic discourse".

We think that this kind of preference, definition and differentiation between "Islam's discourse" and "Muslims' discourse" is important as it contributes to the elimination of many forms of confusion and stresses the importance of removing sanctity and infallibility from the "Muslims' discourse" so that it may become an object of study, review, evaluation, criticism and reconsideration according to the values of the Glorious Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. It also abolishes the distorted religious images fabricated by the ancestors, differentiates between the self and values, and consolidates the spirit of criticism, dialogue, review, acceptance, renewal, nullification, modification and rejection one form of *Ijtihâd* to accept another. Additionally, it contributes to release mental energy, manifest the abilities of *Ijtihâd*, end the state of religious and intellectual terrorism as well as that of the fear of analyzing and thinking, and, finally, planting and developing a climate of intellectual and cultural security.

The reason is that "Islam's discourse" represents the infallible values of the religion and its enshrined standards for human actions, while "Muslims' discourse" represents forms of religiousness, understanding and production. It is an object that can be gauged and evaluated as it is liable to being sound or being in error and may or may not be suitable for its time. That is because religion is different from religiousness.

Unless this *Shar'î* intellectual truth, which restores to the mind its value and functions, releases it from its prison, provides it with tranquility, makes it feel the reward of its efforts and *Ijtihâd* and urges it to perform *Ijtihâd*, is

made clear, this state of continuous confusion will turn into a cultural, intellectual and civilizational tragedy that will lead to disability, weakness, backwardness, and blind imitation. Hence, religiousness will become the religion and the individual will become the standard and measure.

Therefore, the equation will be reversed, and the nation will retreat. The truth will be known through men instead of men being known through the truth.

Moreover, this will not be justified by the claim that this human *Ijtihâd*, or human production is, in all fields, derived from the fountain of the Book and *Sunnah* and depends upon them. This is due to the difference between both of them since what has been provided for the "Islam's discourse", the text of Revelation, present in both the Book (Qur'ân) and *Sunnah*, its distinctive features - with regard to its source of reception and eternality, and because it was revealed from the Creator and received from the Prophet (PBUH) - in addition to the methodology of its transferal and reception, have not been allowed to be subject to human *Ijtihâd*. This is in addition to the variety of human views concerning understanding and *Ijtihâd* and, even, their contradictions. Accordingly, human *Ijtihâd* is ineligible to be a standard or value due to these individual differences.

Additionally, they are the products of an individual whose knowledge and horizon are limited by time and place, regardless of his level of acquaintance with the text, "Islam's discourse, or Revelation's discourse and its absolute knowledge.

Here, we can say that "Muslim's discourse", in its numerous forms and conditions, can be an object of criticism, revision, evaluation and correction.

This can be achieved without suspicion or fear of transgressing against or attacking the religious values. Rather, we consider it as a sign of cultural health and maturity of the civilization, and a method of progress, renewal and a way to break the bonds of stagnation, blind imitation and cultural corruption. This is at the intellectual and cultural levels; at the religious level, this effort is considered as one that deserves a reward.

Therefore, the understanding and indications of terms are the key to this huge, cultural, accumulative and dynamic work. This is because criticism, evaluation, revision and standardization in accordance with the values of the Book and *Sunnah* is the only way to contain error, reveal the truth and achieve the eternity of "Islam's discourse" in reality so that "Muslims' discourse" may come in conformity with Islam and the modern age.

The intended review, here, does not mean to desert or marginalize the values of Islam or to degrade religiousness and religious people.

Rather, it refers to *Ijtihâd*, renewal, correction, revision, eradicating the seeds of evil and moving stagnant matters. Accordingly, the discourse will change to the developmental, productive field and involve issues of the nation and humanity, providing the rational vision required for the movement of life.

Undoubtedly, the need for revising, evaluating and reconsidering the "Muslims' discourse" regarding all political, educational, social, developmental and human fields increases when matters become greater and more serious. Rather, the need for renewal and re-presentation of the discourse and considering its appropriateness may become necessary when the nation is afflicted by any great matter that requires a mature vision, sound solutions, a comprehensive understanding and broad knowledge.

Since life is rapidly changing, there is a present and continuous need to reconsider and develop the discourse as well as test its ability to provide the sound vision necessary for dealing with issues of life and society and the correct keys to approach problems from the right way and understand their effects.

The Horizons of Discourse:

The discourse must take into consideration two dimensions, or seek two horizons for its movement as follows:

First: Most importantly, there should be an ability to look at the future, using the feedback of the facts and events of the past and present to improve the future course of action. In this regard, Allah, Glory be to Him, says: ﴿***Similar situations [as yours] have passed on before you, so proceed throughout the earth and observe how the end was for those who denied. This [Qur'ân] is a clear statement to [all] the people and a guidance and instruction for those conscious of Allah.***﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 137 - 138]

Contemplating the laws of social motion helps to predict results and consequences, cultivate care and know the way to change consequences to avoid crises. This is regarded as the most elevated kind of predictive discourse which helps one have the ability to plan.

Second: This is represented in having special and suitable tools that enable the people to manage crises once they occur so that the treatment will be a studied action that is capable of changing the problem into an experience, an insight, and a solution. Such an action will also be able to

change any indignation into a graceful expression, rather than being mere expressions of excitement and anger from which one learns nothing or in which one does not present any good example.

Rather, indignation consumes one's energy, causes disability, brings shamefulness and leads to disappointment.

Defensive Discourse:

It may be useful to shed light on the issue stating that one dimension of the discourse will naturally and necessarily focus on the defensive dimension, or what can be called as the "defensive intellect" or "defensive production".

We can say that the negative aspects of the defensive or apologetic intellect may be numerous. One of these negative aspects is to remove the spirit of initiation, creativity, arrangement of priorities and freedom of behavior and choice. This is because the defensive mind gives a response that is suitable, or may be not suitable, for the problems and crises posed and fabricated by the opponent. These problems and crises help the opponent to control the field of thinking or intellectual production and move the intellectual efforts and energy to the field he wants so that he can hold the power of the initiative.

The intellectual movement of the Muslim nation consists of just reactions against accusations. Even in the best cases, this stimulates our energy to be eventually directed to serve the opponent's interest and culture.

Hence, the Muslim nation will be stripped of its potentialities, which will be added to the other's account. Moreover, the nation will be separated from its own issues and its spirit of initiative will be killed. There can be no doubt that this is dangerous for its culture and civilization.

If the intellectual energy of the Muslim nation remains controlled by the opponent's hands, its discourse and cultural productions will be generally vain.

The problem is that the defensive mind or the apologetic discourse uses dangerous means, such as the discourse of condemnation and disapproval which encourages hatred and grudges. Also, this requires a state of unhealthy attitudes that will change the intellectual production or the discourse into a kind of consumer intellect, away from the productive, developmental, predictive and creative intellect. Accordingly, the distinguished person will be the one with the higher voice and who is more excited and enthusiastic.

Therefore, preachers will become leaders while, the role of *Faqîhs* (jurists) and experts in establishing the civilization and solving the nation's problems using sound and specialized means will diminish.

We do not want to deny the role of the defensive intellect in protecting the culture, civilization and even geographical limits of the Muslim nation. Also, we do not deny the universal fact of interaction with the other, and so the value of understanding him, and the importance of producing an apologetic discourse. But we point out that this should not totally engross our energy and discourse, go beyond standard proportions or turn us into devices in our enemies' hands. We must still have control of our education, civilization, culture and politics.

If we look attentively at our discourse over the last half a century or even more, we will find that it moved in circles which were previously determined by others, and in a map which was previously drawn out with regard to the issues of penalties, women, inheritance, family, marriage, etc. We go on reproducing the same dialogue, as if what we already presented is insufficient or unsatisfying. This repetition may be at the expense of many vital, daily, human and international issues about which we have not presented any noticeable production, despite the strong need to fulfill the Islamic duty of living up to the age at a time when we are raising urgent slogans about the universality and eternal nature of the Islamic message.

The problem in such cases, on the intellectual arena, is represented by considering the civilization of "the other" and its practices as the criterion.

It is also lies in ignoring the fact that these cases are already incorporated in the Islamic cultural system. That is, the problem is represented by measuring a certain cultural reality on the basis of another.

The criterion – as we see – is not to reject the defensive discourse but to assert the importance of keeping everything in proportion – as mentioned above – so that the defensive discourse does not exhaust all our energy and, consequently, our production becomes negative. This can be implemented by forming a strategic vision that takes into consideration this changing world, the vision of "the other", his participation in this life, his intellectual system and his cultural tools along with exerting efforts to avoid disregarding the persuasive proof and the Islamic vision for those who are searching for the truth. The problem may often be embedded in the one who states the proof, explaining it in a stubborn, fanatical or detestable way, but not in the proof itself, be it sound or not.

If our discourse is restricted to the defensive intellect, we will not be able to revive the Muslim nation or to establish a civilization.

The discourse of Revelation in the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* enlightens us on how to deal with others; even when carrying out a defensive discussion. It did not ignore "the other" with his thoughts and his historical and realistic research since his existence is real and has an effect on life. Additionally, it did not fail to present a broad attitude of defense by replying, correcting, defending, showing defects and refuting the accusations of "the other". Also, it went ahead to acknowledge the existence of some faults, even if they were made by "the other" himself when trying to correct them. Consequently, the accusations of "the other" against Islam are a way for us to recognize our faults and correct them. Allah, the Most High, Says:

﴾They ask you about the sacred month – about fighting therein. Say, "Fighting therein is a great [sin]...﴿ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow):217]

Whoever scrutinizes the causes of revealing this verse will realize many dimensions of how to manage the defensive discourse. Likewise, there are many other verses that were revealed to answer questions or to refute accusations of the other.

Obviously, the Islamic defensive discourse in both the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* did not include all dimensions and fields of the discourse. Rather, it offers the defensive discourse as a persuasive proof for those who are searching for it. Actually, the problem does not lie in the soundness of the proof, but in the historical ideology of "the other" who is seeking the proof. In this regard, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾Their messengers said, "Can there be doubt about Allah, Creator of the heavens and earth? He invites you that He may forgive you of your sins, and He delays you [i.e. your death] for a specified term." They said, "You are but men like us who wish to avert us from what our fathers were worshipping. So, bring us a clear authority [i.e. evidence].﴿ [Ibrâhîm (Abraham):10]

Accordingly, it is necessary to solve the problems, especially after presenting sufficient proofs for those who are seeking them, and to start to form a nation and establish a civilization. Unless this solution had been adopted, all Qur'anic texts and *Hadîths* refuting the claims of the disbelievers and the polytheists would have come to no avail. In fact, the more the verses were revealed to them, the more they remained

unconvinced of the need to ask for more. So, it was necessary to pass through this stage as the developmental, productive discourse is the most effective way to deal with negative problems offered by "the other". Thus, the spirit of initiative may be the solution for dealing with this affliction. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*Hasten to do good deeds before (you are overtaken by) afflictions like a dark night.* »[1]

Also, we have to admit that, today, the Muslim intellect in particular is experiencing the most extreme and dangerous state of weakness that it has ever experienced throughout all of its cultural history. This state of weakness makes the mind susceptible to accept terms, vocabularies, ideas, approaches, slogans and accusations of "the other" at all levels and fields. The scientific, cultural, educational and media institutions established in Muslim countries with the money of the Muslims, have become, somehow, obsessed to accept idea of the other, while presenting nothing of their own making. In the best conditions, the Muslim mind takes into consideration the accusations of "the other" as if we were deliberately trying to allow "the other" to have control over our minds, institutions, instruments, energies and money. This is some kind of hidden occupation, whereas the doors of everything are opened to the extent that a lot of us have lost the right vision and moral values. Many have become yes-men who try hard to justify the bad treatment we received at the hands of "the other".

This reminds us of the saying of a righteous Muslim who said, "Do not be afraid of afflictions because they are the harvest of hypocrites". Grudges have been directed against Muslims, and some voices of tribalism have been raised aiming to divest Arabs and Muslims of their honor.

Additionally, the state of weakness and disgrace has been exacerbated to allow many attempts for others to intervene in formulating a sound Muslim discourse, even at the expense of the principles of religion. This matter has not been restricted to the infiltration of institutions and vital centers to obtain information and attempt to make plans to deal with them, have control over them and predict their present and future reactions, but it has exceeded this to involve an attempt to formulate their discourse, determine their behavior or push them to carry out some practices that justify their exclusion from social interaction all together.

(1) Related by Muslim.

On the other hand, many activities, dialogues, forums, speeches and interviews which present a criticism, evaluation and revision of the Muslim discourse are controlled by "the other". Furthermore, they are controlled by "the other's" standards, considering his civilization as the criterion.

The discourse produced for Muslims has become the object of suspicion for individuals, groups and institutions. Some *Fatwas* (legal opinions and discretion) have been issued according to demand.

Muslims' Discourse Is the One That Takes the Blame:

It is not surprising to see "the other" directing noticeable concern to the Muslims' discourse and conducting symposiums and dialogues in which goals, ideas, researches and recommendations are initially determined by him. For these symposiums and dialogues, some carefully chosen Muslims are summoned so as to form a team that takes part in the presented dialogue and plays the pre-planned role, keeping in mind that many of the tools and contents of the dialogue are deemed, by Muslims, as inviolable, sacred principles and postulates that cannot be touched or discussed.

Ironically, the problem today lies only in the Muslims' discourse, its problems, risks, errors, deviation and evil, while the discourse of "the other" is seen as correct, wise, civilized, good, infallible and pristine. In fact, the Islamic discourse and the Muslims' discourse are the discourses that take the blame, while the discourse of "the other" is the one that is seen as being infallible.

In this respect, there must be a pause to consider the issue of linking Islam with terrorism and reducing the rich history of the Islamic values and civilization to be merely the hostage of a certain situation, conduct, class or group. Undoubtedly, this issue causes a historical, cultural and scholarly irony. If there was deviation and immoderation in some theses of the Muslims' discourse, it is not representative or typical of it, but it is merely an echo of the actions of the "other". That is because the Islamic mindset is not formed as a result of the horrors, violence and oppression of the Crusades, which occupy the mindset of "the other", or under the modern colonization which resulted in oppression, backwardness as well as the mandate over nations under the pretext of their inability to manage their affairs. Moreover, the Islamic mindset is not formed as a result of the institutes and study centers specialized in producing the tools of domination, hegemony and oppression.

It is noteworthy that terrorism is an external factor. Today, the dominant countries take the slogan of "Islamic terrorism" as a pretext for carrying out their actions and preemptive attacks. Also, they use such a

slogan to cause unrest and civil wars within the Islamic World, exhaust its energy and prevent it from the process of development, making use of despotic regimes which destroy everything and hunt down every new experience or idea. The dominant world has invented the idea of preventive wars and this has led to the militarization of the Muslims' discourse.

Therefore, we see that all kinds of condemnations, denunciations, dragnets and security solutions concerning terrorism and extremism are useless. It is also futile and harmful now for any researcher to try to condemn terrorism, whatever the reason, as it raises the very important question: what is the cause of terrorism? This is the case as searching for the reason is prohibited under the claim that it justifies terrorism. This is because searching for the reasons will lead to the condemnation of injustice, oppression and despotism as well as focusing the spotlight on the real perpetrator.

Thus, this matter is no longer restricted to causing physical wars inside the Muslim countries, but these countries have become cultural battlefields as well. This way people and minds are occupied, energies and capabilities are exhausted and money, energies and sacrifices are invested in favor of "the other".

This misleading climate has exposed feelings of hatred and triggered movements of tribalism that have achieved false victories at the expense of Islam and the Muslims. Also, it has produced a tribal discourse that has risen to the surface, aiming at brainwashing people.

Moreover, weakness and backwardness form a compound process that reflects badly on the cultural and productive activities and even on the fields that hopefully represent salvation. For example, many movements, institutions and regimes which work in favor of "the other" and which are responsible for watching over the Muslims' discourse try at the present time, under the domination of the political regimes over the formal religious institution, to politicize the formal religious discourse, direct its courses, predetermine its goals and consequently change the equation. Accordingly, the formal religious institution becomes a tool that works in favor of the political institution, instead of being able to control the political process through religious values and morals. This way, some religious institutions lose their position, influence, credibility and many of their roles. Furthermore, they are isolated from the conscience of the nation and negatively contribute to produce types of religious discourse that may not be free of an unhealthy reaction represented by extremism and misinterpretation which require criticism, evaluation and rectification.

A Combination of *Jibt* (False Religious Authority) and *Tâghût* (Political Despotism):

The cessation of the Divine Revelation due to the death of the seal Prophet (PBUH) led to the cessation of divine rectification and correction. Such cessation requires us to entrust sound minds with *Ijtihâd,* resorting to the sempiternal divine texts (the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*) in a way that is suitable for all times, places and human beings, criticizing, rectifying, removing the seeds of evil and purging the Islamic vision of deviation, immoderation and misinterpretation. Also, reason is entrusted with sound understanding, protecting one's self against deviation and correcting one's path. In this regard, the Prophet (PBUH) said:

«This knowledge shall be carried by the most just among every generation, who will remove from it the misinterpretation of the ignorant, the deception of the falsifiers and the distortion of the extremist. »[1]

This *Hadîth* refers to the idea of laying the foundations of criticism, revision, rectification, renovation and *Ijtihâd.* It also means that neglecting the correct values of religion will lead to rigidity, deviation and immoderation as well as the permissibility of continuous intellectual invasions. We can perceive that these invasions are present and possible, and avoiding them is the means of protection and development.

If the slogan of our great religion is: ﴿***There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion...***﴾, then this means that embracing religion is the highest level of freedom of choice. Even though this religion is the absolute and the only truth, no one can be forced to accept it. Hence, if your

opinion is a mere relative *Ijtihâd* that is liable to be right or wrong, you do not have the right to force the other to approve of it. Initially, compulsion dishonors man and dehumanizes him. Therefore, the way of correction and rectification is only through dialogue, discussion, argumentation and all other means of dealing with the intellect. This affirms the broadest horizons of the freedom of thought.

The most important component that may distinguish the Islamic vision and contribute to its continuity, being separate from other visions, is the eternal nature of the values on which it is founded. This, in turn, requires the

(1) Related by Al-Bayhaqî.

continuity of the process of *Ijtihâd* in order to produce a new discourse that keeps up with the ever emerging problems. This also indicates the existence of constant standards to examine and rectify this discourse and highlight its mistakes, deficiencies and weaknesses, especially since these standards are not man-made. Therefore, human actions, which are the subject of measurement, are not themselves the standards.

Rectifying the paths of freedom of thought is not through canceling, marginalizing or suppressing such freedom; rather, it is by leaving the door wide open for *Ijtihâd*, criticism, revision, argumentation, dialogue and discussion. This, in turn, will serve the elements of mutual understanding, build common factors, correct any deviation and remedy any defect. Thus, we can say that freedom of thought, rectification and criticism necessitates the rule of ﴿***There shall be no compulsion in [acceptance of] the religion...***﴾. There is no compulsion regarding thought in which religion and religiousness come to the forefront, since the worst kind of compulsion is the one concerning religion. Likewise, criticism, rectification and revision are kinds of thought that cannot be prevented or cancelled under different claims or justifications. They are forms of intellectual opposition that are associated with political thinking. They are also genuine parts and partners in the process of building that help reduce partiality at all levels, be they political, cultural or social.

Therefore, we say that ﴿***There shall be no compulsion...***﴾ in Islam. That is, Islam grows and expands in the periods when there is freedom of thought and culture, while it declines and wanes in the periods of suppression, despotism, injustice and absence of freedom. This issue has become absent in the Muslims' discourse due to the provocation that led to bad reactions against injustice, suppression, oppression and pressure. As a result, we see many Muslims protect despotism, in the name of defending *Shûrâ* (counsel), and are against freedom and democracy, as if the battle is between *Shûrâ* and democracy, while it is, in fact, between dictatorship and democracy.

The great problem is that many of those who work in the Islamic field imagine that the process of criticism, rectification and revision may be a means of causing disunity, wasting efforts, revealing mistakes and making the enemy aware of the points of weakness, as if religious values are confined to these people only.

Moreover, the spirit of the dangerously growing partisanship, fanaticism and ideological terrorism, which may go beyond the dangers of political despotism, prohibit the process of criticism and revision and encourage deficiency, weakness and corruption. Accordingly, people of experience and knowledge are marginalized, while those who are loyal to some figures are given preference. In this way, loyalty to thought changes into loyalty to certain figures. Therefore, ambiguity rises and false beliefs along with the appearance of political, despotic dictators.

As a result, political despotism and ideological terrorism meet and unite. Hence, peoples' affairs are managed by *Jibt* (a false religious authority) and *Tâghût* (political despotism). Consequently, religion is politicized by political despotism and the religious text is adapted by the false religious authority for the sake of partisan, sectarian and doctrinal discourse. *Jibt* and *Tâghût* oppose criticism and revision, and incite terrorism and oppression.

The danger of this problematic atmosphere increases when a world power politicizes religion. As a result, the formal and, sometimes, the informal religious institutions, under the dominance of the world power, become incubations that encourage the justification of political acts and make them legal. This danger also increases when the world powers politicize the religious philosophy and define its field, and globalize the political institution and define its field as well as its terms. Thereby, political visions and religious *Ijtihâd* will serve the dominant one, who has control over both religion and policy.

Furthermore, some *Fatâwâ* (religious-legal opinions) will be issued in order to deal with the philosophy of defeat, lay the foundations of weakness and backwardness, and justify the suppression and injustice that arises from the duty of obedience that does not differentiate between the righteous and the wicked persons. Even when religion is separated from policy and life, the problem will remain constant, but in another form.

The Sheikh or the leader of the group becomes the pivot whose followers or party members follow blindly. They feel some reassurance and imagine that they are religious without realizing the deviation involved or even worrying about it so that they may discover the deficiency and devise a method for rectifying it.

Thus, the problem of the Muslims' discourse today falls between political despotism and the false religious authority, be they partisan or sectarian and whatever their connotations and names are.

The Dynamic Nature of the Muslims' Discourse:

The term "Muslims' Discourse" means the Muslims' intellectual production and *Ijtihâd* in different fields of knowledge, relying on the values of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, taking into consideration that the Islamic discourse comprises the Qur'ân, *Sunnah* and the authentic Biography of the Prophet (PBUH). Moreover, the description "eternal" text refers to its ability to respond to the emergent events as well as possessing the flexibility necessary for qualifying it to be applied to these emergent incidents. It also refers to its ability to apply texts to reality and rectify such reality by the values of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* in addition to its ability to correct its paths and goals, since it is a form of human *Ijtihâd* that is liable to be right, worng or need alteration, change, renovation, rectification or revision. Consequently, the Muslims' discourse is dynamic by nature and is liable to change, alteration, renovation, *Ijtihâd* to respond to the new developments and emergent incidents in a fastchanging world.

Therefore, confusing the constant values of religion represented by the Glorious Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, with various forms of religiousness – which refer to the human *Ijtihâd* when applying these values to reality – is very dangerous.

This may be among the greatest problems that have caused narrowmindedness, imitation, backwardness and weakness. That is because it is a confusion between value and essence, between the constant and absolute values of religion as a standard and changeable, *Ijtihâd*-related forms of religiousness that vary according to the changeable status quo.

So, we say that the Muslims' discourse is the product of circumstances and variables and also has the ability to respond and show opinions concerning the emergent incidents of life in the light of the values of the religion. Moreover, it is the product of insightfulness and the ability to foresee the future and the coming repercussions, or what we could call "the anticipative vision of expected crises". This can be achieved in the light of the laws of the social movement resulting from examining the past, looking closely into history and discerning the course of civilization, then, laying down the anticipative visions of the Muslim nation. This is because the required discourse here is not the one that attempts to find solutions, or what we could call "*Fiqh Al-Makhârij*" (*Fiqh* of finding solutions). Also, it is not the discourse that has the ability to manage and deal with crises, no matter

how important this may be. Rather, it goes beyond this to protect the civilization against crises and actualize the purposes "*Fiqh Al-Maqâsid*" (*Fiqh* of purposes).

The discourse which is based on the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* is not only a discourse of finding solutions or managing crises, but it is also a discourse of actualizing purposes, avoiding crises and protecting the civilization as well. In this way, it is not confined to reactions or even defensive thought at its best, but it goes beyond this to reach the plane of constructive and progressive thought.

In fact, man undergoes psychological, physical, mental, scientifical and social changes. So, it is futile to resist laws and abilities so as to place this changeable creature in inflexible molds. For example, the quality of religiousness, as being acquisitive and optional, is liable to increase and decrease. Capabilities of fulfilling the obligations vary from one person to another. The relations among nations and individuals are subject to tension and relaxation. The whole universe is in permanent movement and change.

Knowledge and facts are accumulated and revealed as they are continuously growing and developing.

Moreover, tools and means are also changeable. They may even be the most changeable and mutable of all. This, in turn, requires a continuous reexamination and development of the characteristics of the discourse so as to be able to keep up with the new developments and requirements of the era, qualify man to conform to his status quo and grant him the right vision to interact with it.

Giving the characteristic of sanctity and invariability to *Ijtihâd* and opinions of persons is, undoubtedly, against the nature and the course of life. It also means restricting the eternal character of the divine texts and preventing one from applying them to the real life as well as withdrawing from them.

The point of changing and developing the discourse to keep up with the new requirements and developments is very clear in the Qur'anic discourse, whether when dealing with the human soul, regularly promoting the person or solving his problems, or in dealing with time and its requirements, place or the available potentials. Therefore, when capabilities change, the obligation and the discourse change too in terms of the linguistic expression and the content of the discourse. This is very clear in the difference between the

Meccan and Medinan Suras and Verses of the Glorious Qur'ân. This difference is due to the occasion with which the Qur'anic text deals and the capabilities that determine the extent of the obligation that validates or invalidates the ruling depending on one's ability to apply it.

Furthermore, the difference among types of discourse may be attributed to the goals at which they aim, be they creeds, acts of worship, legislations, narratives, proverbs, argumentations, proofs or miracles, in addition to the diversity of the discourse according to its content. For instance, the discourse of every issue has its characteristics and attributes. Moreover, the connotation of abrogation, from some aspects, is an abrogation of a discourse, a ruling or a legislation that has already fulfilled its role and an entitlement of a discourse, a ruling or a legislation which is better or, at least, similar to the abrogated discourse. In this regard, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***We do not abrogate a verse or cause it to be forgotten except that We bring forth [one] better than it or similar to it...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 106]

In this way, discourse constantly remains suitable for people's conditions and reality.

It is not strange that the verses of the Glorious Qur'ân, which are reminders for whoever has a heart or who is attentive when listening, were revealed in order to deal with certain occasions or incidents, as if the problems of reality and the need to solve them were the cause behind their revelation. Additionally, the indications about the future mentioned in the Glorious Qur'ân should be discerned, prepared for and warnings instituted against neglecting them, as Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***And how many signs within the heavens and earth do they pass over while they, there from, are turning away.***﴾ [Yûsuf (Joseph): 105]

Therefore, these indications will be a guide for the Muslims' discourse throughout time. Hence, the Muslims' discourse will not be restricted to the present only, in spite of its importance. That is because the present is the past of the future.

Many of the *Fiqhî* (Juristic) schools have changed and developed according to the circumstances and the change of time, place and people. In our *Fiqhî* heritage, we may read some ruling issued by Imâm Ash- Shâfi'î at a certain time and place that is completely different from the previous ruling

for the same case issued at another time and place. That is, Imâm Ash-Shâfi'î changed his *Fiqhî* view when he moved from one place to another. To disseminate the values of the Islamic religion all over the world, many of the Prophet's Companions managed to produce a *Fiqhî*, ideological and *Da'awa*-oriented discourse that was able to deal with the people of the conquered countries and their problems, which may have differed from the problems that the Companions were accustomed to in their homeland.

Moreover, the School of Opinion (*Fiqhî* School) - with all its dimensions which were crystallized in Iraq constituting *Fiqhî*, ideological, linguistic and cultural additions - and the School of *Hadîth* in the Hejaz (Hedjaz) are considered another indicator of the dynamism of discourse in the reality of the Muslims. They also indicate the importance of the response of such discourse to the new and emergent incidents and its ability to deal with them by referring to the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. In addition, they state that the suspension of this dynamism is a withdrawal from life and society and a deviation from urbanism and civilization to backwardness and narrow-mindedness.

The process of thinking, changing and developing is the spirit of discourse and the proof of its effectiveness and interaction with 'the other'. On the contrary, the rigidity and narrow-mindedness of discourse are the proofs of its ineffectiveness. Thus, discourse is permanently liable to the process of revision, promotion and development, not only in terms of formulation and its linguistic aspects but also in those of content, tackling human issues in the fields of development, freedom, human rights, environment, pollution, security, poverty, disease, etc., the interaction with 'the other' and the importance of developing the terms that carry the clear connotations of the discourse.

This process also includes practicing *Ijtihâd* in order to present a vision and a philosophy for these issues from an Islamic perspective and being in contact with 'the other' to convey the benefits of religion to him, while acknowledging him and acting kindly towards him so as to win his confidence.

In this regard, I would like to add an issue. As long as Muslims are partners with 'the other' in this life, which is based on co-existence, mutual influence and different cultures, any change that happens in their reality will undoubtedly require a review of the discourse in order to keep up with the new and changing reality.

A Crisis of Treatment, Not of Methodology:

This is a very important issue. It means that we, as Muslims, do not suffer from the crisis of having a discourse that is unable to respond to the development of life in general or from the crisis of having methodology which fails to clarify the purposes, or show the referential framework or present the practical example in the Prophetic biography and the exegetic explanation of the *Sunnah* in particular. Rather, we suffer from a crisis of not knowing how to deal with this methodology or with this eternal Islamic discourse as well as knowing how to find ways and mechanisms necessary to qualify us to deal properly with the Islamic discourse, applying its rulings to real life, rectifying the problems of the new present using the values of such discourse (i.e., Qur'ân and *Sunnah*) and dealing with it via all the components of *Fiqh Al-Wãqi`* (*Fiqh* of reality).

In the Prophetic biography, when applying the values of the discourse to reality, and in the civilizational and historical experience, there are many examples that illustrate the set of characteristics required for reality and the ability of discourse to achieve renaissance, change, promotion and insightfulness.

Hence, the problem is not of a discourse or methodology, but it is a problem of knowing how to deal with and of having the ability to perform *Ijtihâd* and then apply the rulings deduced to reality. This can be achieved through understanding the reality, finding flexible mechanisms of dealing with 'the other' and establishing a state of balance between our dreams and our abilities.

As we mentioned earlier, the problem may lie in the emergence of orators and the absence of experts in the nation, or in the absence of *Fiqh* and knowledge. Here, we can say that our backwardness is reflected in our understanding and dealing with our discourse (i.e., the Qur'ân). Moreover, our awareness of the Qur'ân has been directed to memorizing, reciting and printing it. We have restricted ourselves to the interpretations and understandings of the predecessors without exerting efforts to practice *Ijtihâd* to keep up with our changing reality. I am afraid to say that we are living in the period which the Prophet (PBUH) described as the one characterized by the absence of knowledge, spread of illiteracy and the prevalence of the shortcomings of the previous nations. In this regard Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿***And among them are unlettered ones who do not know the Scripture except [by indulging in] wishful thinking, but they are only guessing.***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 78]

This verse means that they do not know anything about the meaning of the scripture except memorizing and reciting it properly. Ibn Taymiyyah (may Allah confer mercy upon him) related the interpretation of Ibn 'Abbâs and Qatâdah of Allah's saying, ﴿***And among them are unlettered ones...***﴾ as indicating that the people in question have no knowledge about the meaning of the Qur'ân. They only memorize and recite it without understanding its meaning.

This illiteracy has spread in our nation as a result of imitation, and an absence of civilization and the inability to contemplate the Qur'ân and deal with emerging incidents. It also has spread due to the inability to discover Allah's laws and signs in the souls and the universe, to make use of such signs, and understand the deep meaning of the text and deduce its purpose. not to mention to know that these signs recur but never change. Thus, we should make use of them in a way that benefits us or changes our destiny to a better one. Ibnul-Qayyim said:

"A true man will not surrender to his destiny, but he will change it to a better one that is more pleasing to Allah, the Almighty."[1]

This illiteracy is the condition in which we live today regarding the Glorious Qur'ân. It means the absence of knowledge despite the advanced facilities of printing, publishing and the techniques of recording we have. To illustrate, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿***Why do not the rabbis and religious scholars forbid them (the Jews) from saying what is sinful...***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 63]

Interpreting this verse, Ibn Kathîr mentioned the debate that occurred between the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companion Ziyâd Ibn Labîd. Such interpretation may be an indicator of the illiteracy with which we deal with the Qur'ân. This is clear in the next *Hadîth*:

«*The Prophet (PBUH) mentioned something and said, 'This (something) will occur when knowledge is lost.' We said, 'O Messenger of Allah, how will knowledge be lost whereas we recite the Qur'ân, make our*

(1) *Madârij As-Salikîn* (Ranks of the Travelers), volume 1.

children recite it and our children will make their children recite it till the Day of Resurrection?' The Prophet (PBUH) replied, 'May your mother be bereaved of you, O Ibn Labîd! I would judge you as one of the wisest people in Medina. Do you not see that both the Jews and Christians recite the Torah and Bible without benefiting from them?!»[1]

Thus, the problem and the defect lie, today, in the Muslims' discourse, which represents the tools and means of communicating and dealing with the Islamic discourse in the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. This Muslims' discourse has failed and still fails to prepare Muslims to make use of the values of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* and to apply them to reality. It has also failed to examine and deal properly with tradition as a human *Ijtihâd*; this was the beginning that formed the reality from which we suffer and which may continue to afflict our future, should it continue in the same form.

We have to realize that criticizing the Muslims' discourse and intellectual production in all fields of knowledge is the tool to change and move from one stage to another. We have also to realize that the culture of criticism is the one that causes the normal concern, the realization that there is a contradiction between values and reality as well as the permanent obsession and the constant effectiveness of the process of thinking about improvement and determining the points of deficiency.

Furthermore, we have to build the critical and just reason that carries the true values; finds out the points of narrow-mindedness, immoderation, deviation and corruption; criticizes and rectifies such points courageously trying to respond to the Prophet's saying:

«This knowledge shall be carried by the most just among every generation, who will remove from it the misinterpretation of the ignorant, deception of the falsifiers, and distortion of the extremist.»

We shall thus fulfill the numerous examples mentioned in the Islamic discourse concerning self-criticism, as mentioned in Allah's saying:

﴿***...Say, "It is from yourselves [i.e. due to your sin]...*** ﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 165]

We shall also be able to criticize the civilization, as done in the Qur'anic narratives. That is because if we do not realize the above-mentioned problems, we will remain in our illusion of thinking that we are

(1) Related by Ahmad.

acting well. In this regard, we may say that the Prophets are the messengers and pioneers of criticism, correction, change and rectification of reality using the divine values.

I have to remind you that the privilege granted to the Muslim nation as the best of all nations has been achieved due to rejecting and not permitting mistakes and wrongdoings. This is because maintaining such a privilege depends on the continuity of criticism and mutual advice which, in principle, represent the spirit of the Muslim nation and the way of its immortality.

Naming deficiencies and deviations, according to the values of the Glorious Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, as "abominable acts" may be among the highest levels of criticism and mutual advice. Islam has made criticism, rectification and revision both a collective and individual duty. In this respect, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿And let there be [arising] from you a nation inviting to [all that is] good, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is wrong, and those will be the successful.﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 104]

The Prophet (PBUH) also said:

«He who amongst you sees something abominable should change it with his hand; if one cannot do so, then one should do it with one's tongue; and if one cannot do so, (even) then one should (do it) by (abominating it in) one's heart, and that is the lowest (degree) of Faith.» (1)

Furthermore, Islam regards avoiding criticism and mutual advice as an act of disobedience and a cause for disasters and mass punishment. Allah, the Most High, says:

﴿And fear a trial which will not [only] strike those who have committed wrongs among you exclusively, and know that Allah is severe in penalty.﴾ [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 25]

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«By the One in Whose Hand is my soul! You will (either) enjoin righteousness and forbid evil, or Allah will send a punishment upon you from Him, then you will supplicate to Him, but He will not answer your supplication.» (2)

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(1) Related by Muslim.
(2) Related by At-Tirmidhî. He deemed it as *Hasan* (approved) *Hadîth*.

He (PBUH) also said:

«*When people see a wrongdoer and do not punish him, Allah will soon send His punishment on them all.*»[1]

We should keep in mind that Islam does not excuse those who abstain from carrying out criticism, mutual advice and *Al-Hisbah*[2], as the Prophet (PBUH) said: «*Fear of people should not prevent a man from saying the truth if he knows it.*»[3]

Thus, the privilege of being the best nation as well as maintaining growth, charity, sustainability, mercy, rectification of deviations, actualization of the infallibility of the nation (as a whole), correction of mistakes and defects, and reviving the nation depends on the continuity of criticism and mutual advice (i.e., enjoining the good and forbidding the evil).

That is why the processes of criticism, mutual advice, revision and forbidding evil are acts that have taken a historical dimension in reference to the stories of the Prophets with their peoples. These processes have not been restricted to criticizing 'the other'. Moreover, avoiding criticism, mutual advice and the forbidding of evil are the reasons behind the destruction of the nation as Allah, the Almighty, says: ﴾***They used not to prevent one another from the wrongdoing that they did. How wretched was that which they were doing.***﴿ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table):79]

Those who participated in the Battle of Badr were, no doubt, the best of the nation according to the Prophet's (PBUH) saying:

«*Perhaps Allah looked at those who participated in (the Battle of) Badr and said, '(O warriors of Badr!) do whatever you like, for I have forgiven you.'*»[4]

Regarding these Companions, Allah has told us about their dispute regarding spoils after the Battle, and how a group of them was reluctant to march to the Battle, arguing with the Prophet (PBUH) concerning the truth after it had become clear. Books of *Sîrah* (Prophetic Biography) relate that 'Ubâdah Ibn As-Sâmit said:

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(1) Related by At-Tirmidhî. He deemed it as *Sahîh* (authentic) *Hadîth*.

(2) A religious authority based on enjoining what is good and prohibiting what is evil. The official of such an authority, called: *Muhtasib* (inspector), supervises markets, observance of cleanliness and public rules of conduct. Moreover, *Hisbah* also means doing a good deed waiting for Allah's reward.

(3) Related by At-Tirmidhî. He deemed it *Sahîh* (authentic) *Hadîth*.

(4) Related by Al-Bukhârî.

«We differed as regards dividing the spoils of Badr to the extent that our manners were about to become worse, so Allah, thanks to His Mercy, entrusted their division to Him and His Prophet (PBUH).»

The verses in the beginning of Sura of Al-Anfâl (The Spoils) are proofs for this situation which required reexamination and a correction of the defect.

After the Battle of Uhud, which ended with great defeats and losses, the Prophet's Companions asked about the causes behind the defeat saying, ***﴿From where does this come to us?﴾***. The decisive answer of the Glorious Qur'ân was, ***﴿Say, 'It is from yourselves [i.e. due to your sins].﴾***. Moreover, the causes of the defeat were mentioned in the verses in details so that Muslims could take their precaution. After the battle, the Glorious Qur'ân went beyond this to criticize the inward situations of the souls, as stated in Allah's saying:

﴿...Among you are some who desire this world, and among you are some who desire the Hereafter...﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 152].

However, the problem may lie in the inability to develop the methods of enjoining good and forbidding evil as well as the means of general supervision in the many fields of the Islamic reality. Moreover, the process of enjoining good and forbidding evil has resulted in examples and practices that may be unconvincing and even rather offensive. On the contrary, other nations have developed their branches of knowledge and life activities, be they political, social, economic, educational...etc. This development has been designed to promote mass media and, thereby, make it, in addition to criticism, rectification and revision, a fourth authority.

Undoubtedly, these miserable practices do not reduce the importance of the values and their role in reforming social behavior, correcting the path of the nation and protecting it against deviation. So, we call to activate the role of criticism, rectification and revision of the Muslims' discourse in an attempt to regain the effectiveness and the importance of these values and to develop their methods and means. This is because reviving the nation and restoring its effectiveness depend on realizing the dimensions of its mission, determining its path and establishing ways to protect it, represented by criticism, revision and rectification. In this regard, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿You [true believers in Islamic Monotheism, and real followers of Prophet Muhammad and his Sunnah] are the best nation ever raised up

[as an example] for mankind. You enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong and believe in Allah... ﴾ [Âl-'Imrân (The Household of 'Imrân): 110]

It is noteworthy that knowing the criteria of criticism, rectification and revision as well as defining their reference points in order to find out defects and offer alternative solutions are among the main pillars needed to carry out the process of criticism. In this way, criticism will never be turned into some kind of tongue lashing and mutual advice will never be avoided as the Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*Religion is sincerity (i.e., to be sincere and true to Allah, to His messenger, to the Muslim rulers and to all the Muslims).*»[1]

Moreover, mistakes will never be concealed under the pretext of unity, solidarity or hiding the points of weakness from the enemy, as if the Qur'anic verses revealed to criticize the best generation of Muslims (the early Muslim generation) after the two Battles of Badr and Uhud, though they were also in urgent need to be unified and hide their points of weakness from the enemy, were a mistake.

Concealing mistakes and defects leads to the accumulation of backwardness, narrow-mindedness, rigidity and a decline of the civilization. It also represents a kind of deviation from the changeable laws of life and the requirements of *Sharî'ah* concerning mutual advice and renovation, a deviation from the methodology of the Glorious Qur'ân in establishing the Muslim nation and an indicator of the defects of the religiousness of the previous nations which led to the decline of their civilization. This is because Allah, the Most High, says: ﴿***They used not to prevent one another from the wrongdoing that they did. How wretched was that which they were doing.*** ﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 79]

Education in the spirit of criticism as well as creating the capability and rehabilitation for approving revision and criticism is not an easy matter. Rehabilitating society, as well as preparing the recipients, educating them and training their minds to review, compare, examine and recant and then also consider this to be in parallel with adherence to the truth - or what is legally termed as "the ascertaining before taking a decision" or in other words spreading the culture of criticism, mutual advice and forming a critical mind – are the way to make renovation, change and promotion

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî.

acceptable. Otherwise, the discourse of criticism and rectification will be condemned as being a deviation from public course and as being futile.

Rehabilitating the recipient to be convinced that the critic is the partner in the process of building, and to realize that the critical mind is the one that is able to develop and change is of great importance with regard to the contemporary Muslims' discourse. Generally, this is required and necessary for discourse and cultural production, although criticism may be accompanied by partiality, defamation and, sometimes, deviation from the etiquettes of knowledge and disagreement. This becomes clear when the criteria of criticism, rectification and mutual advice are man-made, being formulated due to worldly desires and a settlement of accounts.

However, argumentation itself is an indicator for reaching the truth. On the contrary, if the criteria of criticism are not man-made but divine, then reaching the truth is unquestionable.

The Seriousness of Convicting Criticism:

In my opinion, the great problem of discourse lies in convicting and incriminating criticism which, in turn, has led to the absence of criticism, rectification, revision and mutual advice. This is due to the confusion of the Muslims' discourse, which is the outcome of relative, human *Ijtihâd* that is liable to mistake and correctness and requires criticism, revision and rectification using the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. In other words, this criticism should be conducted by means of the infallible, constant values of religion represented by the texts of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* and real examples of the sound biography of the Prophet (PBUH).

The absence of these criteria has led to imbalance, confusion and the dominance of intellectual terrorism which encourages error, establishes imitation and backwardness, prevents creativity, renovation and *Ijtihâd* and triggers dangerous and haphazard outbursts. Moreover, it puzzles the Muslim and makes him in doubt about the feasibility of the values of Islam and their ability to solve problems, deal with emergent incidents, look closely into the future and offer the correct answers for everyday questions using the Glorious Qur'ân and *Sunnah*. This is because religion or religiousness, today, has turned into infallible religious authorities that are regarded as the standards of Islam.

Surely, this is the major and most dangerous problem of the discourse. Other circumstances and minor problems that result on the margin of the

major one are mere aspects that require solutions which basically depend on solving the major problem.

It is noteworthy that this problem originally comes from the absence of a collective, strategic mind or strategic thinking which discerns goals, perceives circumstances, worries about the backwardness of the nation, accommodates wishes to capabilities, studies the feasibility of any task before undertaking it, fulfills the required studies of experts and specialists, controls movement, follows up the accomplished stages, evaluates stages, defines the points of defects and takes into consideration the available capabilities and surrounding circumstances. At the top of these procedures, this mind should know about 'the other' and his plans and watch his behavior.

The Muslims' discourse may be required in the present time to defuse the tension of anger, fervor and agitation which, naturally, prevent people from discerning, meditating on capabilities and choosing the suitable discourse according to the circumstances of time and place. In this way, a mental change will be brought about for Muslims and, thus, their thought and intensions will be crystallized and activated before taking any real action or movement.

Some Deficiencies of Contemporary Muslims' Discourse

It makes good sense to point out some deficiencies which negatively affect the Muslims' discourse and its multilateral functions. Many Muslim activists seem divorced from society, insensible of its strengths and problems, and hold unreliable judgments which they think exonerate them from responsibility and justify their "social withdrawal". Here are the most noticeable drawbacks of the Muslims' discourse:

Temporal/Spatial Dissociation:

One of the most dangerous drawbacks of the Muslims' discourse is that it is irresponsive to societies' daily life issues. It does not provide Islamic solutions for the social problems and this diminishes the application of Islamic values to people's lives.

The main purpose of religious values is to purify humanity; eliminate problems and sufferings; preserve human dignity, freedom and equality; and establish monotheism.

It is a dangerous even destructive phenomenon to isolate oneself from society and refrain from dealing with its problems on the grounds that such

problems result from the presence of non-Islamic systems and values and that the problems would never have occurred if Islam was followed correctly.

First of all, Islam aims at guiding people and saving them from ignorance, deviation and iniquity. With this in mind, when we experience problems because of adopting non-Islamic values, it will be reasonable to put Islam in practice to encounter them, rather than keeping passive and allowing problems to grow.

Another equally unfortunate claim is that solving such problems is the responsibility of the state, which does not comply with Islam, and that trying to reduce them will be a way of supporting such a type of state. In fact, this notion implies nullification of the role of Islam in life and avoids contributing to the development of the nation.

As a result, the Muslims' discourse is for the most part idealistic and distant from reality. How can it be presented to people while it is not mindful of their problems and concerns? How can we make Islam be followed better? Does it make sense to remain in the waiting room until we have angelically pure people?

The escape from the present and future to the past and the over-nostalgic focus on the old glorious days probably represent an inability to accustom oneself to the new changing epoch, is a way of limiting the absolute Islamic values and a subconscious mechanism to compensate for the inferiority complex and lack of achievement.

Objective reflection on the past and making use of it to understand the present and predict the future is crucial for progress and development.

The present is the product of the past and the baseline for the future. These three eras are the components of civilization and the determinants of understanding and dealing successfully with life. Ignoring one or more aspects of time represents a state of unconsciousness for the civilization. Obstinately sticking to the past while being unable to utilize its experiences and lessons is an indication of idleness and cultural retardation.

To illustrate, take an Islamic periodical, remove its label stating its date and see if you can manage to identify the period and place where it occurred. Then, take a periodical fifty years later than this first period and you will find the same issues discussed in the same ways. Fifty years of change had no impact on the public discourse and ways of thinking!

To be honest, we should admit that our public discourse is mostly unrealistic and "out of context". This has largely to do with our narrowminded and sectarianism-dominated culture.

Party/Sectarian Mentality:

Narrow-mindedness and intolerance of different opinions produce a discourse based mainly on sectarianism and self-admiration. For example, party-owned newspapers and websites strongly advocate the thoughts of politicians belonging to these parties while they bitterly criticize their opponents. Universities, schools, mosques, the media, etc. are exploited as tools to deepen the gap between different sides of the intellectual and political spectrum.

Instead of promoting dialogue, cooperation and enrichment, the political discourse has become stiff, or even tabooed; rather it now develops tensions and even wars. In such an environment, loyalty to just causes is transformed into bias towards specific persons. The society's groups and institutions have turned from a means to support certain values and doctrines into the very end itself, serving personal or sectional interests.

Although they could build and defend their "party fortresses", the parties and groups could not cope with changes and could not modernize their conduct accordingly. Their only success was in glorifying and exaggerating the importance of their leading figures.

The above-mentioned description of social groups applies exactly to the governments. They are all subject to the same discourse and have almost the same mentalities; they are different just in their forms. When both the government and the opposition are in trouble, hopes of reform are minimal.

Discourse of Crisis or Crisis of Discourse?

Different situations need different courses of action, and every context has its own strategy, language and decisions. It is wrong to generalize one mode of discourse to all situations and contexts. Discourse should be relevant; otherwise it will be unlikely to have any effect at all. Because of the failure to prevent or solve crises, many Muslim figures and populations have experienced inadequate interpretations of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*, the Muslim heritage, and the relation of Islamic values to practical life.

Under the successive, unresolved crises, the public discourse has become dominated by anger, protest and conspiracy. The problem is that

such a mentality becomes prevalent over time and is unable to see how things can be changed, turning the public discourse itself into a real crisis.

The contemporary Muslims' discourse is focused more on recalling the tensions of the crises than the lessons and "feedback" which they provide. In fact, having this "aggressive" way of thinking is asking for trouble.

Ardent Discourse vs. Competent Discourse:

The Muslims' discourse has become full of inciting speeches, agitating slogans and wars of words. The contemporary "masters of rhetoric" enjoy loud voices and play with words, but do not have a penetrating insight into problems and how to deal with them. This only brings about a weaker form of consideration, more waste of efforts and demagogism, in addition to a belief that demonstrations, high pitched slogans and violent clashes are the successful solutions for the nation's problems.

Besides, unless the "shots of enthusiasm" given by the public speakers are combined with professional programs and new possibilities for action, they will probably cause uncontrolled outbreaks which could plague the nation with deterioration and dependency.

Knowing that judgment is a product of perception, how can it be perceived that preferring the impassioned discourse of demagogues to the specialized and expert discourse will solve the problem? Perhaps the worst result of this is giving priority to trusted partisans instead of specialists and experts.

Indecision about Requirements:

Another drawback of the general Muslims' discourse is its inability to decide on the requirements needed for every type of discourse. As mentioned earlier, an effective discourse is a relevant discourse, one that considers its specific situation, subject and audience.

As the tradition goes, "Talk with people according to their level of knowledge". If irrelevant, the public discourse can be very harmful, even though it originally has useful aims.

For the public discourse to be relevant, it should use context-specific styles, language and instruments. The Glorious Qur'ân includes numerous examples of relevant discourse. For war and encouraging military mobilization, the Qur'ân focuses on such ideals as martyrdom, heroism, self-sacrifice, courage, endurance, victory and the Heavenly reward in the Hereafter. For example, Allah says:

﴿O Prophet (i.e. Muhammad; PBUH)! Urge the believers to fight...﴾ [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 65]

﴿O you who have believed! Fight those of the disbelievers who are close to you, and let them find harshness in you...﴾ [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 123]

﴿... So strike (the disbelievers) over the necks, and smite over all their fingers and toes.﴾"} [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 12]

﴿Fight against those who believe not in Allah...﴾ [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 29]

When dealing with *Da'wah*, the Qur'ân enjoins dialogue, a constructive argument, tolerance, gentle treatment, etc. Allah says:

﴿Call (humankind, O Muhammad) to the Way of your Lord (i.e. Islam) with wisdom (i.e. the Divine Revelation and the Qur'ân) and good instruction, and argue with them in (a way) that is best...﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees):125]

﴿And argue not (O Muslims) with the People of the Scripture (i.e. the Jews and Christians) unless in (a way) that is best...﴾ [Al-`Ankabût (The Spider):46]

﴿Say (O Muhammad), "O People of the Scripture (i.e. the Jews and Christians)! Come to a word that is just between us and you...﴾ [Âl-`Imrân (The Household of `Imrân):64]

﴿And by the Mercy of Allah, you were gentle with them. And had you been severe and harsh-hearted, they would have broken away from about you...﴾ [Âl-`Imrân (The Household of `Imrân):159]

As for the Islamic Creed, the Qur'ân uses a different style of discourse. Allah says:

﴿There shall be no compulsion in (acceptance of) religion...﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 256]

﴿You (O Muhammad) are not a dominator over them.﴾ [Al-Ghâshiyah (The Enveloper): 22]

﴿... Say (O Muhammad), "Bring forth your proofs, if you are truthful.﴾ [An-Naml (The Ants): 64]

For citizenship and inter-religion coexistence, Allah says:

﴿***Allah does not forbid you to deal kindly and justly with those who fought not against you on account of religion nor drove you out of your homes...*** ﴾ [Al-Mumtahanah (The Woman Tested): 8]

For international relations, Allah says:

﴿***And if they incline to peace, you also incline to it, and put your trust in Allah...*** ﴾ [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils): 61]

The Qur'ân uses different styles to exhort, prohibit, state *Shar'î* rulings, tell narratives, etc. The style of the Meccan verses (which focuse on the belief in Allah and call others to Islam) is different from that of Medinan verses (which deal with legislation and the establishment of the Muslim society).

Being not clear about the necessary properties of discourse creates a lot of problems. With this confused strategy, the discourse for *Da'wah* may be found to be used in times of war, the discourse for victory may be used in cases of defeat, the discourse for military mobilization may be used in place of that for religious freedom, and so on.

Fiqh Holders, not *Fiqh* Scholars:

The lack of real *Fiqh* scholars and experts has caused much chaos and abuse of *Shar'î* rulings. There are different rulings for different situations; if the possible rulings are not well-understood or the conditions of reality are not studied carefully, it will be unlikely that the right rulings will be applied to the right situations.

For example, it is known in religion that accountability depends on personal capacity. When a religious obligation is completely out of someone's capability, he will be pardoned for not performing it. Thus, if a *Mufti* is not aware of this *Shar'î* principle, he can judge such a person to be nonobservant of Allah's Ordinances. Another example: It is well-known that some *Shar'î* rulings (e.g. decisions related to war, legal penalties, covenants, etc.) are the responsibilities of the governments not of the individuals, otherwise there would be continuous clashes and bloody events. Because some groups do not recognize this fact and insist on over-throwing the leadership of the state, the Muslim nation has incurred huge losses and has been placed in a disadvantageous position in relation to other nations.

Repetition:

The nation's deteriorated situation and helpless discourse have affected even the academic and scientific circles. While supposed to be the "incubators" of creative, progressive discourse, they are influenced by repetition, literalism and focusing only on the texts (the Qur'ân and *Sunnah*). Although it is important to rely on the text, it is only half the job; the other half is to put the texts into effect. We have to use *Ijtihâd* to produce a realistic discourse that shows how to apply the *Shar'î* texts to people's lives and reform the Muslim society according to the Islamic values.

Unfortunately, after centuries of social change, cultural enrichment and technological progress, we are still unable to work out different patterns of text processing other than those of our predecessors, failing to introduce new views, deduce rulings or provide solutions for the problems of modern life. Nowadays, many periodicals, official studies and academic dissertations are too flimsy to be useful. Repetition wastes a lot of time and effort without causing a single move forward.

Docility:

Another equally serious deficiency is that the Muslims' discourse, at its best, is a "tail actor". It lags behind society, not leading it to deal successfully with its issues of concern. Instead of explaining the Islamic rulings and how to apply them to daily life affairs, the present Muslims' discourse tries to adapt these rulings to the mainstream of society, which is a way of "putting the cart before the horse".

Confusion between Heavenly Values and Human Endeavor:

The current Muslims' discourse confuses the values derived from the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* (which basically determine the far-reaching goals and purposes) with the human roles of interpreting and implementing these values. It puts them against each other in an exclusive choice: The mind or Revelation? This leads to either a religion without mind or mind without religion. In fact, the mind is the instrument by which guidance and instructions of Revelation are received, and which determines how they can be applied to the changing conditions of life.

This paradox takes up a lot of effort and time in vain, at the expense of other more important issues. The Muslims' discourse is reinforced with

eloquent slogans and values while it is unable to produce practical programs and solutions for the nation. In other words, it is focused more on the outward appearance than on the implications. As a result, the Islamic intellectual sphere has become vulnerable and is easily intruded into by incompetent people.

Person vs. Value:

The confusion between the absolute and the relative, or religion and religiosity, is almost the biggest problem of the Muslim reality. It accounts for the present diseased culture of "religious terrorism", which misuses the notion of Divinity (which protects human equality, freedom and dignity before One Lord), replacing it with dubious clerics and idolatrous rituals and practices.

This confusion brings about division and discord in religion. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿*... **And be not of the polytheists, those who split up their religion and became sects (i.e. left the true Islamic monotheism and invented new matters in religion), each sect rejoicing in what it has.*** ﴾ [Ar-Rûm (The Romans): 31 and 32]

This dangerously leads to disorientation, creates barriers among members of society, and reduces the Heavenly guidelines into mere "ask-for-blessing" texts. At the same time, the opinions and behavior of certain persons who have spiritual influence become the patterns to follow, and any criticism or refutation of them is considered a blasphemy against religion.

In other religions, the clerks have always played this perilous role, claiming to judge in the name of God and monopolizing the knowledge of religion and theology, which they exploit to gain exorbitant power and wealth through their utilitarian alliance with the sovereigns and aristocrats.

In fact, only Islam has the ability to separate the idea of divinity from the elite, substantiating the facts that rulers and clerks are just human beings, that everyone is responsible before the Lord, and that advice and correction are human necessities. As Imâm Mâlik (may Allah confer mercy upon him) said, "Anyone's opinions can be supported or refuted except for that of the inerrant Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)."

Misunderstanding the Collective Duty:

A further disastrous deficiency is the wrong approach to the concept of the collective duty (as opposed to the individual duty). Simply, collective duties are the public responsibilities which, when performed satisfactorily by some Muslims, are no longer obligatory for other Muslims. If they are not performed, then all the members of the society will be considered religiously inobservant and deserving punishment.

Such responsibilities involve everything which is necessary for people to live better, develop, and seek the good and happiness for humanity. This is possible by enforcing expertise, efficiency, honesty, discernment, an intention to augment strengths and eliminate weaknesses, and a willingness to serve the interests of the society.

Our faltering between wishes and possibilities, neutralization of competency and expertise, waste of energy and inattention to the facts of the present and future are all products of our insensibility to the utmost importance of collective duties. More dangerously, we suffer from "affected religiosity"; many people overstep their respective fields of specialization, intruding on *Da'wah* and public discourse. In fact, it is prohibited in Islam to intervene in something without having enough knowledge about it.

Even if one has a good intention, these "intruders" are, at best, like a mother who may have sincere love and care but no medical knowledge. When her child is sick, she should entrust him to a qualified doctor, who is better able to diagnose and cure the disease.

In my point of view, sincerity should entail insight, which makes one limit himself to what he really knows and can do. Such "encyclopedic" people who allege to know everything only make things worse.

Restraint within Predetermined Frameworks:

One reason for Muslims' inefficiency at fulfilling their universal mission is the restriction to traditional, iterative circles which have received far more-than-needed attention. Such classic issues as women's inheritance and rights, divorce, polygamy, legal penalties and enforcement of the *Sharî'ah* are still of concern in the Muslims' discourse, which, particularly under the new accusations of terrorism laid against Islam, remains besieged, defensive and reactive.

On the other hand, the Muslims' discourse seems hardly interested in the urgent issues of freedom, human rights, development, education,

technology, environmental protection, poverty, globalization, free trade, homosexuality and unrestricted sex, family disintegration and social permissiveness. It focuses more on passively defending Islam than on giving it a more influential role at the national and international levels.

Orientation towards Death:

The Muslims' discourse focuses much on military mobilization, militarism, martyrdom and struggle in the Cause of Allah. These concepts have become so deep-rooted in the Muslim mentality that they need much scrutiny and standardization.

When self-sacrifice is perceived as a means of enabling freedom of belief and *Da'wah* and is used correctly and contextually, it becomes an advantage that provides the Muslims with spiritual motivation and the whole world with free choice and a respectable life.

Contrarily, it is very dangerous if these concepts are not given wellthought *Shar'î* channels and strategic standpoints. When used exaggeratedly, they can become a real and uncontrollable social menace. More dangerously, the enemies of Islam realize our strong passion for sacrifice and exploit it to involve us in wars in which we have no interest. We are actually penetrated and controlled by our enemies, though we think we are making our own choices and decisions. This way, we are giving our enemies invaluable help while harming and weakening ourselves. As a result, Muslims today are experiencing a very delicate situation:

The people are against the governments and the governments are abusing the people. Accusations and mistrust are predominant, energy is wasted, and the *Shar'î* rulings are dealt with poorly and unintelligently.

The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*Deeds (i.e. their correctness and rewards) depend upon intentions.*[1]»

Intention here implies careful planning and strategy for action. He also said:

«*Whoever fights under the banner of ignorance (i.e. to be blind to the cause of fighting), (unjustly) takes the side of his clan (due to his fanaticism), calls for fanaticism to one's clan, or supports his own clan (i.e.*

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî.

fights not for the Cause of Allah but for the sake of one's clan), (if he is killed in that fight, then he) dies as one belonging to the days of Jâhiliyyah (i.e. the pre- Islamic period).»[1]

The Muslims' discourse and literature need to understand that our true mission in life is to live for the sake of Allah, not to die for the sake of Allah, unless there are just reasons. The best people are those who live for the benefit of themselves and others. We should lead our lives following the guidance of religion, realizing that self-sacrifice and martyrdom are ways to protect life.

Self-Excusing Mentality:

Self-exemption is a chronic flaw of the Muslims' discourse. It prevents Muslims from admitting, assuming responsibility for and thus correcting their faults. We always blame our problems on our enemies, who would have not succeeded but for our own deficiencies.

You never find an official who admits a mistake, as if they all are infallible and "everything is perfect"! Even when admitting a failure, they always find some excuse; e.g. the adverse circumstances or malign intrusions (or, sometimes, destiny itself).

We do know that there is, for the most part, a conspiracy against the Muslim nation, but the problem is when we indulge in the notion that only our enemies are responsible for everything bad that happens to us, as if we are standing inactive and open to their conspiracies.

In fact, we need to change the old "that is all we can do" mentality to a more energetic strategy of "there are always better things to do", which entails being realistic, promoting constructive criticism and improvement. Otherwise, our failure will continue and grow into a "social tradition".

Monopoly:

Exactly like the dictatorial political leaderships, the Muslims' discourse is afflicted by a network of public figures that take control of it in all events and places. They monopolize the cultural life of the society and check any attempts to modernize or to empower new blood.

Although they have been present for so long and have proved a terrible failure, they still have the upper hand, as if they are the only indispensable choice for the citizen. This applies also to the organizational level; many groups and parties claim that they represent Islam.

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(1) Related by Muslim.

Conclusion:

We have discussed the importance of public discourse and its cultural and social roles. It is the actor that determines whether or not a civilization thrives, public awareness increases and collective thought develops. Representing the intellectual production of society in different fields, public discourse is more or less the criterion of a civilization.

Every aspect of life has its own discourse (diplomatic, economic, social, educational, religious, etc.). For example, the discourse used in times of war differs from that of an election campaign. Similarly, every historical era has its own philosophy, language, priorities and issues of concern.

The discourse used during the Cold War is no longer suitable in the post- Gulf-War world.

The techniques of public discourse have been so highly crystallized and developed that each mode of discourse has distinctive rules and guidelines.

Public discourse is strongly correlated with communication as a modern science. It is subject to scientific methods of research, development and evaluation.

All the facts of religion and history emphasize that renovation and correction are necessities in Islam, since there is no longer a Heavenly Revelation. The Prophet (PBUH) said:

«At the end of every hundred years, Allah raises up in this (Muslim) nation one who will renovate the religion for it.»[1]

The troubles we incur are the results of our mistakes as well as our cultural incentives, both of which need to be corrected to reconsider and improve our reality. The Islamic civilization is everlasting by virtue of its inspiring nature, religious "revival" and self-correction.

The values of the Qur'ân and *Sunnah* are the reference to judge human beliefs and conducts, which drives Muslims away from defective thoughts and enables them to continuously renovate and rectify. This combination of absolute values and human activity gives the Islamic

civilization its energetic spirit, protects it from extinction, and motivates it to spread its universal message to all people, even when it is in a state of weakness.

(1) Related by Abû Dâwûd.

Will Muslims understand this point and set themselves right by carrying out self-criticism and continuous review before it is too late and before they are stuck in their own faults? Mutual advice is not merely selfappeasement, but rather is a way to liberate ourselves from inflexibility, imitation and deterioration.

The successful discourse is the relevant discourse that makes use of the different available specializations to examine reality and identify the possible opportunities and threats. To that end, there are major questions which we need to be clear about:

Why discourse? (Goals and purposes)

To whom it is addressed? (The audience's cultural backgrounds, levels of education, problems, interests and experiences)

How can be conveyed? (Determining, testing and improvement of methods and techniques)

When? (Awareness of the nature of the time)

Where? (Awareness of reality and its components)

In the very end, we should always ask: Is our public discourse moving towards desirable objectives or are there errors and obstacles? Are we making use of consultation and peer assessment to learn and improve ourselves before being beset with our mistakes?

Media Discourse in Age of Globalization

Dr. 'Abduh Mukhtâr Mûsâ (*)

The Islamic media does not intend to refuse all current forms of media, but to dye the current media and its enhanced channels and modern patterns with a pure Islamic color that suits the Muslim community. This requires us to set frames to identify the principles of the media in accordance with Islam. These frames must emanate from the content of the mission of the Islamic media and utilize modern technologies.

Introduction:

Discourse consists of language, form and style embodying the spirit of content and expressing the essence of thought. Hence, thought without a clear and coherent discourse is just general and comprehensive ideas. That is, discourse can be considered as the actual application of ideal values and principles. Some researchers give a dynamic value to discourse as being the program of public work of an intellectual symbol or a particular party.

Discourse, as a term, is more capable of expressing personal identity and ideology. It can be compared to direction in drama or presentation since it is a very important integral element for the essence of thought.

(*) Academic researcher, Omdurman University (Sudan).

Thus, some great ideas may fail as a result of a bad presentation or weak discourse. For example, political discourse is the ideological response of a certain group, party or thought in a particular political stage in history, to stressful challenges. Hereupon, media or communicational discourse cannot be isolated from political discourse, but there is a controversial relationship between them. Such a controversial relationship has been reflected by the appearance of "Political Communication", a branch of knowledge in the fields of Sociology and Political Sociology. This field clearly involves an inter-disciplinary approach as sociology overlaps with sociopsychology, political sociology, political sciences and the media.

This field paves the way for a deep scientific study of several issues and subjects, such as political socialization; public opinion formation; the inculcation and re-orientation of values; indoctrination; political discourse with regard to language, content, resources and targeted audi ence; political role of the media, such as agenda setting; and processes of brainwashing, usage of symbols, camouflage, propaganda, intellectual image formation, public opinion formation, political persuasion and political participation activation.

Political institutions need media discourse so as to perform five main tasks: unification, legalization, orientation, dispute settlement and policy execution.[1] Media discourse, which is consistent with principles and goals, can help unify visions and form public opinion about an issue. This, in turn, gives a kind of legality and provides orientation. It can also, with a rational presentation, participate in removing tension, settling disputes and paving the way for policy execution.

In the age of globalization, media discourse takes a greater role since the Muslim Nation faces an aggressive civilizational war, religious and ethnic agitations, and great challenges that require a responsible discourse. This can only be achieved by using a unifying and reviving approach that can cope with contemporary discourse.

Moreover, tackling the problem of media discourse in the age of globalization requires a philosophic vision, systematic methodology and great literature to form a general frame through which we can generate the proper language and direct the contemporary Islamic media discourse. This also requires studying the international reality in which Islamic discourse works along with all its challenges, the greatest of which is the media of globalization. The question is: What are the characteristics of the media of globalization towards which we must direct our discourse? What are the characteristics of the discourse that we must accordingly establish?

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(1) C. A. Smith and K. B. Smith, "The Rhetoric of Political Institutions", in D. C. Swanson and D. Nimmo (eds.), New Directions in Political Communication. (Newbury Park, Ca: (Sage, 1990), P. 226.

Media Required to Form Contemporary Discourse:

The issue of Islamic media discourse relates to the concept of Islamic media. The latter should be based on the Islamic perception of the media as well as the moral, educative dimension in the communication process.

Islamic media is free and independent. It avoids partiality and flattery and it cannot be used as a tool in the hands of authorities to control, utilize or deceive people. An example of this is the propaganda conducted by despotic political regimes that turn media into a tool of pressure and coercion. Such kind of media is known as "persuasive media" or "voluntary media" that aims at exploiting the public to execute certain policies. Islamic media adheres to the values and principles of Islam and expresses them in all the information presented to the people. (1)

By Islamic media we do not refer to a new science or a rejection to all existing forms of media, but we intend to dye the current media, with its enhanced channels and modern patterns, with a pure Islamic color that suits the Islamic community. This necessitates using reason, discretion and deduction in order to lay the foundations or principles that frame the deeply-rooted media guided by a scientific approach that absorbs the requirements of the content of the message of the Islamic media on one side, and utilizes and adopts the modern technology of contemporary media to serve the message of the Islamic media on the other side. That is because it is not realistic to work in isolation from the technology of modern communication. Also, it is not religiously right to absolutely surrender to the effect of the international media and thus become affected by the content of its message, which may contradict with our Islamic creed and values. Hence, media should depend upon values and concepts that dominate the society where it works and submits, concerning the contents of its programs and plans, to the doctrine of that society. This is a basic and just demand which is unanimously agreed upon. (2)

The aim of the Islamic media is to spread our ideas and the Islamic call and heritage using the most modern means of communication and contemporary media. It also aims at adopting these attractive means

(1) Ibrahîm Imâm, "*Usûl Al-I'lâm Al-Islâmî*" (Principles of Islamic Media), Cairo: Dar Elfikr Elarabi (1985), P15.

(2) Mahmûd Muhammad, "Media and the Status of the Arab Saudi Book", 1st edition, p. 47; Abdel-Wahhâb Kuhil, "Scientific and Practical Bases of the Islamic Media", (Beirut, 'âlam Al-Kitâb ublishing House, 1985), p. 20.

and sophisticated devices that present topics in such an interesting way to express the Islamic image so that the Islamic values can spread and replace the intruding foreign values. Yet, this requires considering how to present the Islamic heritage in an attractive and lively media form without affecting it or distorting its original values. Thus, we must "introduce the Islamic contents in an artistic way that reveals their greatness and makes them more respected and esteemed by Muslims so that they will love such contents and adhere to them, using them as their outlook on life and pattern of behavior.

The attributes of the Islamic media can be defined as follows:

First: Methodology

It is an Islamic methodology that includes the message of the media as well as its content and objectivity. This message must include a call to adhere to the values and principles of Islam by using the mass media in the Muslim countries; that is, a call for virtue, good manners, honesty, good dealings with others, good neighborhood relations, peace, social security, cooperation, integration, brotherhood, equality and freedom. These lofty concepts and principles require reliable and faithful elements and cadres capable of forming them honestly. Also, these cadres and elements should possess talents and have the readiness to present them to the audience, in sincerity, enthusiasm, and true interaction with the content and aims of the message.

Second: Artistic Media Means

It refers to the artistic form through which the message that focuses on the Islamic approach should be treated or formed. Every message has a certain artistic form that fits its targeted audience. Determining the means, whether printed, audible or visual, suitable for conveying the message lies upon the skill and discretion of the Muslim media. With this in mind, media content should be formed in an attractive way and presented indirectly, away from direct, monotonous admonition, since many religious programs in Arab countries are not attractive for the audience.

Islamic media should act in accordance with the original truth of Islam by having a comprehensive approach of life, not a limited approach that deals with only some aspects of human reality. Accordingly, all types of programs, series and movies should stem from the concepts of the Islamic Creed and be affected by the values and principles resulting from it.[1]

(1) Mukhtâr 'Uthmân As-Siddîq, "*Contemporary Islamic Media*" (in Arabic), Afkar Jadida Magazine, Khartoum: Intellectual Work Foundation, 4th issue, March, 1999, pp. 97-98.

Adopting this concept and approach, Islamic media should achieve specific goals, including: (1)

1. Spreading the doctrine of Monotheism and releasing man from any kind of slavery, except that towards Allah, Exalted be He.

2. Promoting people's concerns and elevating their minds, souls and behaviors; spreading Islamic culture with its lofty values and principles; improving the level of intellect; and striving to unite the nation and enforce the spirit of coherence, cordiality, recognition and harmony among Muslims.

3. Directing the call of Islam to all humans using all methods in line with all times and places in addition to exhorting *Da'wah*. Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction...﴾ [An-Nahl (The Bees): 125]

4. Defending the nation's cases and interests and caring for the Muslims' affairs everywhere in the world.

5. Working on striping the capitalistic Western civilization of its inhuman concepts and secular ideas, uncovering all of its false doctrines and calling for a return to the simplicity and purity of Islam.

6. Directing the technological war towards enemies as a weapon of *Da'wah* and resistance.

7. Confronting the war of propaganda, counter-propaganda and rumors.

Some researchers have defined specific functions for the Islamic media, such as revealing the truth, fighting falsehood, conveying the *Da'wah*, applying the principles of sound education, elevating people to higher ranks due to them embracing Islam, realizing co-operation and harmony, making use of their time, and realizing development and entertainment.

Islamic media works on achieving these goals through the known functions of media, including information, analysis, interpretation, guidance, entertainment, and advertising and marketing.

However, achieving such goals via the above-mentioned methods and functions must be done in the framework of the comprehensiveness of

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(1) For more information about the goals of Islamic Media, kindly see: Ibrahîm Al-Imâm, *"Origins of the Islamic Media"* (in Arabic), P. 31.

Islamic conception, which is built on the Islamic cognitive structure with its elements and resources (Qur'ân, *Sunnah,* Islamic heritage, criticism and contemplation). In fact, achieving consistency between the media and the cognitive structure requires a formation of common principles, or Islamic theory, from which the Islamic media should be built and seek guidance, at both the theoretical and practical levels, in order to achieve its goals and convey its message. This highlights the necessity of forming a kind of Islamic media theory whose bases, aspects and characteristics are defined by Muslim scholars – distinguishing it from Western theories which stand on material and secular bases. Without taking this step, it is not right to talk about the presence of any kind of Islamic media in our contemporary reality. Moreover, forming an Islamic media theory is a necessary step that should precede the media discourse required for the Arab Muslim community.

The next step in building the Islamic media discourse is to pay attention to Muslim journalists, as well as Muslim callers and preachers, as they represent the most important pillar in the Islamic discourse. Thus, the Arab Muslim journalist should adopt the Islamic concepts in conveying his message and performing his role in the light of some principles, the most important of which include: truthfulness, piety, morals, *Da'wah* (calling to Islam) and conveying the message of Islam, and taking account of one's actions.

First: Truthfulness:

Truthfulness is one of the Muslim's attributes. Therefore, the Muslim journalist must be truthful and honest in covering events, reporting news and performing investigations. Moreover, he has to exert himself in searching for the truth, reveal it to the audience, and maintain credibility.

Second: Piety:

Journalism, verbal or written, in the Islamic philosophy must be practiced on the basis of piety. Here, we intend the wide meaning of piety, implying that it is the source of goodness. The Muslim journalist is the one who is mindful of Allah in his work and fears no one when declaring the truth. He, also, is the one who should keep telling the truth, make his work a message and an act of worship, make the interest of society as his goal and the satisfaction of Allah as his main objective, follow the Prophet's example and seek guidance from the Qur'ân. In this regard, Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***O you who have believed, fear Allah and be with those who are truthful.***﴾ [At-Tawbah (Repentance): 119]

Third: Morals:

As a principle and code of behavior, morals should be a standard that control the work of a Muslim journalist, and thus keeps him away from hypocrisy and lying, so that he can do his work honestly and objectively.

Furthermore, morals help the Muslim journalist refuse taking presents and bribes paid to him to serve a certain group while excluding the others, or twist the truth and falsify news, seeking to please authority or people with power and wealth so as to achieve personal aims.

Additionally, Islamic morals keep the Muslim journalist away from blackmail and abuse, and prompt him to avoid using and displaying pornography that violates the values of the Muslim community. When we speak about morals, we often think of definite, contradicting elements, such as good and evil, and truth and falsehood. The Muslim's morals necessarily represent the positive side of these elements.

Fourth: *Da'wah* (calling to Islam) and conveyance of the Message of Islam

Islamic media, as a call, refers to a journalist's commitment to the principles of *Da'wah* with regard to his work and the various channels of communication.

Media here is not separated from *Da'wah* since "media is one of the stages of *Da'wah*, and the process of conveying the message of Islam is a basic step that leads to belief and conviction. A Muslim preacher or caller should be aware of the subject of Islam." Islamic media differs from other kinds of media in terms of concepts, components and goals.

The nature of the Islamic media relies upon conveying the truth. This is referred to in the Glorious Qur'ân as "calling to Allah", as Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴿ ***[Allah praises] those who convey the messages of Allah and fear Him, and do not fear anyone but Allah.*** ﴾ [Al-Ahzâb (The Allied Parties): 39]

Allah also says:

﴿ ***And who is better in speech than one who calls to Allah?*** ﴾ [Fussilat (The Expounded): 33]

This indicates that a Muslim's concern and aim should be the truth and Allah's satisfaction. (1)

It is noteworthy that the Arabic nouns "*Di'âyah*" and "*Da'wah*" are derived from the same Arabic verb "*Yad'û*" (i.e., call or invite) which

(1) Monotheism Magazine, issue 65, June 1993, p. 99.

means in English "to invite, prompt, convey and attract." In this regard, the Islamic Call is to adhere to truthfulness and convey the message of Islam as well as its doctrine and values to the people. Moreover, it is to prompt the people to understand and believe in it, and attract them to adopt such a message as a standard for their behavior in life. (1)

Fifth: Taking account of one's actions:

The side that watches over a Muslim journalist is his conscience. His aim is to reveal the truth and convey certain news. Hence, a Muslim journalist is in no need of a supervisor besides his conscience, which takes account of his actions, since he knows for certain that there is another observer over him; Allah. In this relation, Allah, the Most High, says:

﴿***And We have already created man and know what his soul whispers to him, and We are closer to him than [his] jugular vein. When the two receivers [i.e. recording angels] receive, seated on the right and on the left. He [i.e. man] does not utter any word except that with him is an observer prepared [to record].***﴾ [Qâf: 16-18]

The non-Muslim journalist, besides being subject to official supervision, is controlled by other effects such as ethnic considerations, partiality and class preference as well as lobbies. All these factors affect the journalist in the way he deals with events, and reports and edits news. Furthermore, experts of journalism admit the effects of such factors, so they assert that there is neither complete neutrality nor absolute objectivity.

The Muslim journalist, however, can go beyond these limits and overcome the above-mentioned effects, since Islam is not based upon personal membership to limited entities. Rather, it is based upon the unity of origin and belonging to the One Creator. Also, Islam is based on equality among all people. Accordingly, in the Islamic media, there is neither class discrimination nor ethnic, economical or political considerations that effect a journalist's work.

In the light of these principles, we can lay down an Islamic theory about the field of the media. This theory has a pure, divine methodology and it differs from the secular theories which are based on Western unethical and material philosophy with which the Western journalist is absorbed. Thus, there is an urgent need to set the Muslim journalist free from the trap of Western philosophy, its Machiavellian approach and material influence.

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(1) Ibrâhîm Imâm, "*Usûl Al-I'lâm Al-Islâmî*" (Principles of Islamic Media), p 22.

That is why we should, in our attempts to set the principles of the media, consider the Islamic perception in all aspects of the communication process, in all ways the media tackles events, all patterns, contents and channels of the message of the media, and the preparation of the cadres working in the Islamic media according to the comprehensive, constructive vision of the principles of the media. This vision includes news, articles, advertisements, *Da'wah*, public relations, public opinion as well as newspapers, magazines, radio, TV, computer, Internet and other modern means of communication.

This should be achieved according to the Islamic approach and the type of technical media.

The concept of "professionalism" is now associated with the concepts of dissolution and indecency in mass media due to the fact that people have increasingly become accustomed to these matters. For example, producers and directors in charge of the mass media, especially the audiovisual arena, think that the only way to attract the audience's attention is through exotic dances, pornography, naked bodies or exciting voices. However, we can employ the artistic work of media, such as movies and series, to spread Islamic ideas and values and so be able to introduce useful behavior to the audience and present religion in a proper way that is suitable for the age.

Identifying the principles of the media according to Islam does not imply isolation from modern technology; rather, it means employing these technological means to spread the doctrine of Monotheism, and use the media in accordance with man's mission in the universe, keeping in mind the concept that states: "Work is an act of worship."

Media in the Age of Globalization:

There are specific facts that have resulted from globalization, the most significant of which is that the West is the center and source of globalization and that globalization does not concern modern technological means or new patterns of production; rather, it is about value and cultural contents.

Hence, it is reasonable that one is apprehensive and reserved about dealing with globalization. Accordingly, many thinkers and researchers in our Arab and Islamic world look carefully at the hidden aspect of the glitter of globalization. Actually, criticizing this phenomenon does not mean complete refusal of it, which is not possible in reality. Instead, criticism should go beyond the feeling of daze to call to form a vision and an

approach of how to deal with such a phenomenon in a way that preserves the identity of "the other" (i.e. non-Western countries) in a rapidly globalized world that waits for no one. Critical examination of globalization reveals its real implications as a new phenomenon related to the Western supremacy and sovereignty over the world: "Globalization is the generalization of an American cultural consuming pattern over the whole world." [1] That is why some observers describe this process as an attempt to Americanize the world.

In the Arab and Islamic world, we are now globalized by the instruments of globalization, such as satellite channels, e-commerce, mobile phones and the Internet, as well as our interaction with the values and results of such phenomena. Through this global interaction, we unconsciously give up our cultural identity and gradually acquire the new values of the West.

The risk lies in the fact that we are being globalized without being prepared or equipped with any original approach which is based on our doctrinal principles. In fact, equipping ourselves with such an approach has to be conducted by substantiating its principles (according to Islam).

Talking about the substantiation of principles according to Islam in the light of globalization entails considering the facts of globalization, specially in fields such as media, culture and thought, as well as what relates to these components concerning aggressive secular attacks against Islam and the firm doctrinal principles, values and identity of the nation. These attacks weaken the nation's ability and efficiency in facing foreign invasion.

In order to attack the identity of the Muslim nation, globalization uses effective weapons, especially the media which is regarded as a basic instrument which targets the Muslim nation's identity. Thus, we must study the risks of globalization from the cultural, media angle.

When confronting the media of globalization, we must bear in mind that the Islamic media is not isolated. Rather, it works in the frame of – and even against – the Western media, which dominates the international media and influences international public opinion, including that of the Muslim communities. Therefore, we should study the contemporary international media as well as its prominent figures and attributes, and the forces that control it and set its agenda.

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(1) Muhammad 'âbid Al-Jâbrî, press interview to the Independent magazine, London, issue 170, August 11, 1997.

The international status quo, with which the Islamic media interacts, has witnessed major changes in the field of media and information since the Third Industrial Revolution that "focused on a flowing, limitless production of the human mind, such as exhaustive ideas, information and knowledge, especially in fields of communication, information, space, computer, electronics and genetic engineering." (1) Regarding this globalized international reality, the Islamic media should "employ communication technology and other sophisticated and scientific methods and devices that can serve the Islamic *Da'wah*. Islam is not against modern means, as long as they are used in the interest of Islam." (2)

As a part of the Third World and the developing countries, along with our distorted image in the eyes of the West, we are affected by international media, which is monopolized by the rich countries of the North and West that control communication technology. This international Western media stands on a philosophy that contradicts our religion (i.e., Islam) and works under a set of values and beliefs that differ from the principles of our Creed. Moreover, the Western media lacks objectivity in covering events since it works in favor of the Western countries. Thus, due to the presence of this unbalanced and unequal media that does not stand on principles serving humanity, there is an urgent need for precautionary measures as an initial stage which will later develop to a complete strategic constructive offstage that works to produce meaningful media which is aware of its role in the world.

The importance of adjusting the role of the media to be in line with our principles– or the Islamization of the media – as a concept, process and institution, lies in the fact that we are facing a cultural attack and a war of thought that uses media as an effective mechanism to achieve its goals. In their attempts to distort the Islamic culture, Orientalists have used a variety of direct methods such as encyclopedias, books, radio and TV. Additionally, they have used indirect methods such as the disciples of Orientalists who

(1) Arab Press Agency, special service, "*Al-Ra'y Al-'âm*", a Sudanese journal, Khartoum, issue 1146, October 27, 2000.

(2) Water Lipmann, "The World Outside and the Picture in Our Heads". In: *The Process and Effects of Mass Communication*, by Wilbur Schramm and Donald F. Robert, (eds.), University of Illinois Press, 1977, P. 265.

have been influenced by their ideas and slogans, and consequently work to spread them among people in the Arab and Muslim nation in all the intellectual, educational, cultural, political and social fields of life.

In this regard, a Western researcher said, "The world which we have political dealings with is beyond our awareness, so we must imagine it. For this reason, the role of the media is used to visualize this world."[1]

This is how a Western researcher sees the important role of the media; forming the West's mental image of other countries.

The Western media, as an institution of modern Western civilization, depends on a basic hypothesis: The Westerners are superior to other people. Here, we must take into account that Western intellectuals and people in the media are prisoners of their Western culture, which history shows that it was and is still based on such an arrogant perspective of superiority. Moreover, they see Muslims at the lowest step of the ladder, since the Westerners have a fixed mental image about Muslims and Arabs as being underdeveloped, barbarians and radical people who incline to war and violence. As long as Islam is seen as a radical threat in the eyes of the enemies, it will remain in the focus of the international media, just as it has been in the last quarter of the 20th century. This Western view about Islam has historical and cultural roots, as the Western media is influenced by the mental image fabricated by the West about the Muslims and Arabs.

The West has kept on reproducing this image across generations, until it has become deeply rooted in the Western public opinion and is also spread through satellite channels to the international public opinion.

In the setting of such a traditional Western view about the Muslims and Arabs, the media message covering events in the Arab and Muslim countries is processed, and the message directed to these regions is chosen and edited. In his book, "Who Dares to Speak?", Paul Findley, the former American congressman, admitted the American partiality against Arabs in favor of Israel. He believes that the partiality dominating the US media coverage of Middle East news is due to the success of the Israeli lobby to control the US mass media by launching a professional campaign threatening the mass media using various means. These means include a set of threats to editors and advertising circles, such as organized boycotts, fabricated lies and personal defamation campaigns. These are the weapons

(1) Paul Findley, Beirut 1986, "*Who Dares to Speak?*", P.483.

used against impartial journalists to force them not to publish news that conflict with Israel's interests.[1] Also, such means involve threatening journalists of losing their jobs, since the majority of the mass media in America is dominated by the Jews. Thus, when we perceive this setting which is against Muslims and Arabs along with the Jews' domination over the US media as well as their influence on making decisions of foreign policy regarding the Middle East, we will realize the dangers of the Western media on Islam.

The relation between the international media and globalization can be traced back to the middle of the 19th century, when channels of international communication represented by international news agencies appeared.

The Western monopolization of the international media has lasted until the current age; the age of computer, satellites and the Internet. Due to the great, rapid flow of information, this age is known as the age of the explosion of information. While the West continues to be the source of this revolution, the Arab countries continue to play the primary role of receivers or consumers, not the role of innovators or producers. Through the West's domination over the international media, the Western culture still overcomes other cultures.

It goes without saying that information conveys the culture of the West. That is why we should deal with this revolution and its contents. Some researchers speak about "the ideology of information, communication and media". They affirm that this technological revolution is a real one as it regulates qualitative transformations in various fields of theoretical and practical scientific knowledge. In this regard, Kuhn said, "It is a revolution that calls for moving from an old conceptual system to a new one."[2]

The Arab Islamic concerns about the information revolution are due to this dimension of values and ideology. That is because the Arab Islamic culture has an attitude that rejects the claim that science, art, literature and the media globalized by modern satellite technologies are neutral. "The problem is not represented in the fact that they display pornographic

(1) Jalâl Amîn, "*Muslims in the Face of the Information Revolution*" (in Arabic), *Al- Mujtama' Magazine*, issue 1344, 6/4/1999.

(2) Samîr Amîn, "Globalization: the Fashion of the Age " (in Arabic), a critical view about globalization and social transformations in the Arab World, seminar of the Arab and African Research Center, the Arab Sociology Association, (Cairo: Madbûlî Library), p 59.

movies, but it lies in continuously conveying their moral values and patterns of life, even if the movie is free of pornography and violence."[1]

Thus, it is wrong to superficially regard the Western media as means of conveying entertainment and pleasure. In fact, they convey values and ideas and have a political, not commercial, nature. "Many countries seek to upgrade and spread their languages, cultures and visions all over the world. For example, there is a consensus that the BBC channel tries to circulate the English and Western vision throughout the world." [2] (3) This also applies to the other international radio and satellite channels. In fact, this moral and intellectual dimension which conveys the contents of the international media must represent a matter of concern for the Arabs and Muslims, especially in the age of contemporary globalization.

Because of the Jews' awareness of the importance of information and media, they controlled and still control the international media. The Zionistic protocols have expressed statements such as, "Not a single announcement will reach the public without our control. Even now we have already attained this inasmuch as all news items are received by only a few agencies, to whose offices they are focused from all parts of the world. These agencies are then already entirely ours and publicize only what we dictate to them."[3]

The oldest international news agency, Reuters, was founded by the German Jewish reporter, Julius Paul Reuter, whose name until 1844 was "Israel Josaphat". The Jews also have power over the oldest journals in the world as well as the international cinema, as they have realized its importance in spite of the invention of TV. The young people, in the Third World countries, still rush to cinemas because of their attraction and the exotic movies they display, regardless of the censorship in some countries. Thus, the Muslim authorities should pay attention to the type and contents of imported movies. For this reason, the Jews pay much attention to the industry of the cinema. This explains why most of the international cinema pioneers, especially the Americans, are Jewish, such as the German Carl Mayer, the Russian Sergei Eisenstein and the American David Grivet who is regarded as the head of the American Jewish cinema tycoons.

(1) Jalâl Amîn, *Al-Mujtama' Magazine*, last source, P. 24.
(2) Ziyâd Abû Ghunaymah, "Zionistic Domination over the International Mass Media", Oman, Dar Imârah, 1989, p 99.
(3) Ibid, pp. 29-35.

Statistics show that more than 90% of those working in the US cinema, including producers, directors, actors and cameramen, are Jewish. [1]

Since the 19th Century (1830, exactly), the Zionistic propaganda has been active, launching major campaigns against Islam, starting with its attempts to weaken the Ottoman Empire so as to cunningly pave the way to destroy the Islamic Caliphate, which is the symbol of Islam for all Muslims. During that time, the role of the Jewish propaganda was clearly witnessed in several fields, such as the following:

1. Defaming the image of the Turkish Muslims by showing them as murderers who indulged in corruption. This was done with the aim of inflaming the spite of the European Crusades against them.
2. Urging Crusade colonialism and tempting Europeans to attack some parts of the Ottoman state. In fact, the Zionistic propaganda succeeded in achieving this goal.
3. Exciting enmity among the Druze and Christians in Syria and Lebanon and hastening to accuse the Ottoman state of being the main instigator of this enmity. Indeed, the Zionistic propaganda succeeded in reaching its goals using Mustafâ Atâturk, who was depicted as "the Savior" by the Zionistic propaganda.
4. Distorting the image of the Arabs and Muslims by falsifying Arab Islamic history and convincing Christians that Islam poses a great danger against Christianity.

The Zionistic scheme continues by imposing intentional news blackouts on Islamic issues, such as the Russian brutal and savage attacks on the Muslims in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Chechnya, Kashmir, Afghanistan, etc. In addition to the Jewish domination over the international media, there are also Christian media groups that target the Islamic world.

They fight Islam and participate in Christianization campaigns, the most important of which are:

- International Catholic League for Radio and TV.
- International League for Christian Radio Announcers.
- Universal League for Christian Radio.
- International Organization for Christian Media.
- Voice of the Gospel.

(1) Ibid, p. 67.

- ELWA (Eternal Love Winning Africa)
- Voice of Tanga Radio.
- RMC (Radio Monte Carlo).
- Radio of Alwa, an American Christian Radio located in Liberia.

Three of these institutions use short waves to broadcast 20,000 hours per week in about 125 languages, which makes these Christian media institutions the strongest international channels.[1]

As a result, the Islamic media faces both Judaism and Christianity in the age of globalization. This is one of the major challenges facing the Islamic media discourse with "the other" as well as the international public opinion.

Muslim Intellectuals and Media Discourse:

Talking about media discourse must refer to the role of the Muslim and Arab intellectuals as a basic element in the structure of media discourse due to their ability to perceive the nature of the targeted audience inside and outside the country, the characteristics of local and international environments, and the challenges of reality, and, consequently, the attributes of the required discourse. This necessitates the existence of committed Muslim intellectuals. Commitment here is based on belief about the gravity of the situation, comprehension of the message, grasping the role, and having an independent attitude and vision. That is, the attitude of a Muslim intellectual is to be determined in the light of the criteria of truth, objectivity and the Islamic concept. The presence of these characteristics in a Muslim intellectual represents the base from which the intellectual can get out from the state of intellectual superficiality, and changing attitudes and principles, which results from a weak faith, a lack of fully understanding all the aspects of the message and a lack of moral commitment.

The needed Muslim intellectuals are those who are committed to the Islamic values, elements of the Islamic culture and noble patterns of behavior in the Muslim community. As a result, they will be a good example, both in deeds and words, and can perform the role of enlightening

(1) For more details, see Dr. Mohiyy Ad-Dîn 'Abdul-Halîm, "Problems of Media Work among Contemporary Constants and Findings" (in Arabic), Kitâb Al-Ummah, Presidency of *Shar'î* Courts, issue 64, 1419 AH.

others. Furthermore, these Muslim intellectuals are the ones who undertake the educational and developmental role, directing people towards change and representing a guide for the people to cause progress of their civilization. The intellectual, in this sense, can reliably assume the mission of change and development, and can express the feelings of the public and the inclinations of society.

In this regard, the role of the Muslim intellectual in both the Muslim society and the structure of media discourse should receive enough attention.

The intellectual is a member of the influential elite and opinion makers, but not a member of a passive group isolated from the public. The intellectuals must be knowledgeable and able to interact with the public and reflect their opinions and expectations. Through their effect and capability of interaction, they can set a high personal status for themselves. Accordingly, they can suggest opinions that are respected and appreciated by society.

Moreover, through the public means of communication, intellectuals can, due to being a part of opinion makers, "introduce new values and attitudes to society, and participate in depicting a national picture of other societies for the public and in forming values, preferences and goals to be adopted by others."(1)

Furthermore, intellectuals have the ability to convince, prompt and mobilize the public, and can participate in forming public opinion. However, the participation of intellectuals depends on "their tenacity, the attitude of ruling regimes towards them, and their attitude towards political issues and society."(2)

In addition, the intellectual, along with the thinker, people in the media and the rest of the opinion makers represent the most important references in the process of forming Islamic media discourse.

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(1) `Abdul-Ghaffâr Rashâd, Public Opinion (in Arabic), a study on political outcomes, (Cairo, 1984), p. 132.
(2) Ibid, p. 135.

Conclusion

The necessity of creating a contemporary Islamic media discourse requests that such a discourse be based on an Islamic vision, that is in harmony with the approach of identifying its principles according to Islam.

By identifying the principles of media discourse according to Islam, we mean to commit it to have a moral side by presenting and conveying the message honestly and sincerely. Hereupon, we can define specific attributes for Islamic discourse as follows:

1. Objectivity
2. Rationality
3. Contemporaneousness
4. Clarity, simplicity and flexibility
5. Consistency and avoidance of contradictions

Accordingly, we need an objective, rational, flexible, effective and contemporary discourse. In order for discourse to be objective, it must be real; and in order to be rational, it must avoid sensationalism, joking and using offensive language. Moreover, in order for discourse to be efficient, it must target the public as well as the local and international public opinion in a clear and consistent way. It should also embody actions, not reactions.

By flexibility, we mean that the discourse must avoid inactivity, radicalism and extremism. That is, it must be dynamic and renewable, since we always tend to lose the targeted audience because of inactivity and repetition. This actually causes boredom that distracts the audience due to expatiation or long introductions which do not focus on the main points of the message of the discourse. Also, the discourse must be free of typicalness and pre-made forms, such as repeating the mottos of a conspiracy theory, adhering to the past, and continuously weeping over history. This is in order for us not to reproduce the state of weakness, fragility and vulnerability that we suffered from earlier.

To build a contemporary Islamic discourse that can confront the age of globalization, we must start with self-criticism. It is important to reveal that our discourse is weak because we have fallen victim to contradictions resulting from contradicting dualities, especially that of "the self and the other", in the light of an absence of self-dialogue.

The discourse which is self-directed must overcome the state of contradictions that affects its role in guiding the nation. For example, the Islamic media discourse must overcome the fabricated contradiction between nationalism and religion in the Arab world, since there is no conflict between religion and nationalism. Rather, Islam can participate in unifying the Arab nation.

Contemporary Islamic Discourse
Aspects of Crisis and Approaches to Solution

Dr. Rafiq 'Abdus-Salâm (*)

Islamic discourse needs to be reviewed and its priorities need to be reordered. This can be done by letting the value of society prevail over the state, education over law and the tendency to reform over punishment and deterrence. Live experience reveals that coming to power through the state system involves risks and challenges.

Since the middle of the 20th century, and especially throughout the last two decades, the Muslim world has witnessed religious and political wakefulness whose effects can be seen in various aspects of public and personal life. Moreover, the trends of this wakefulness have spread all over the Muslim world and influenced the cultured elite and organized political circles as well as the daily life of society. Under this tremendous transition, Islamic trends have managed to maintain a strong and active presence in the political and cultural

(*) Researcher on international politics, University of Westminster (UK).

lives, participate effectively in public elections and win seats in the parliaments of the Islamic countries that allow some freedom in political activity. Even some of the Islamic countries whose regimes are dictatorial could not suppress the political Islamic movements or eliminate them from the political equation.

It is certain here that this situation proves, in one way or another, the return of Islam to the core of the international equation after its long absence which was imposed by the power of occupation and the oppressive pacts that accompanied them. The most important of these pacts was the Sykes-Picot Agreement (1916) which caused the division of the Muslim nation into regions that were under international dominance.

Then occupation and its imposed pacts began to get rid of any signs of the presence of Muslim politics in the international arena by weakening the Ottoman Empire and wiping it from the international equation. As a result, Islam changed from being a strong effective opponent in the international arena to a mere file in the agenda of the Western politicians under the name "The Sick Man" that later changed to "The Eastern Issue".

Due to the gains it has achieved, the Islamic political wakefulness cannot be denied. However, it has significant shortcomings and defects often represented by several slightly different titles like "the crisis of Islamic discourse", "the crisis of Islamic thought", "the crisis of Islamic awareness or intellect" and suchlike titles. Actually, there may be some exaggeration in tackling the crisis or understanding its causes. Yet, this does not prevent us from saying that there is a real deep problem that needs to be carefully diagnosed, investigated and solved.

Contemporary Islamic Discourse
The Roots of the Crisis

The crisis of the contemporary Islamic discourse, or what is often called "the crisis of Islamic awareness", can never be separated from the crisis of the Islamic reality. Islamic discourse is not expected to be in a good condition in the light of the disintegration of the Islamic scientific and educational institutions that feed it with the elements of life and growth, or in the light of the social and institutional disintegration witnessed by the Muslim world. One of the most important lessons we have learned from the prominent scholar Ibn Khaldûn is that human construction is an interrelated process consisting of different components and elements.

Hence, when an element suffers any damage, the other elements will be affected. In this sense, the Islamic cognitive and scientific production will not be reputable and sound if the scientific institutions are disintegrated.

Likewise, Islamic discourse cannot be strong and effective if the reality resulting from it or that deals with it is confused and troubled. This applies exactly to the status quo of the Muslim nation.

The crisis of the Islamic awareness crack (that has arisen due to the break of Islamic awareness) is one of the major problems from which the modern Islamic discourse suffers. This crisis has resulted from the historical discontinuity caused by a wave of prevailing Western occupation and the subsequent state of disorder and unrest experienced by the Muslim world up till now.

Islamic discourse witnesses a state wavering between the disintegrated ancient heritage and the distorted new trends. It has neither maintained the historical continuity of the rich ancient heritage nor adopted the new attitude with all its advantages. We no longer see an encyclopedic scholar who is well-versed in the various branches of Islamic knowledge, including Grammar, Morphology, Eloquence, *Fiqh* (i.e., Jurisprudence), *Usûl* (i.e., Fundamentals of Islamic Jurisprudence), Islamic Theology, etc. Even the specialized Islamic thinker or researcher (or the one who is often called "the intelligentsia") – who is supposed to subrogate the encyclopedic scholar or *Faqîh* (i.e., Muslim jurist) – is totally absent, or, at least, has no significant influence on Islamic knowledge. This condition reflects, in one way or another, a deep and broad crisis represented by the inadequate performance of the historical educational institutions and the poor performance of modern universities in the whole Arab and Muslim world. These modern

universities could not maintain the enormous scientific and cognitive heritage left by the traditional educational institutions nor have they reached the high standards of modern Western universities.

The modernity shock, which the Muslim world suddenly faced, and was accompanied by military and political interference and economic dominance, has led to major cracks in the social and political structure as well as in the Muslims' life style. Consequently, it has negatively affected the structure of Islamic awareness, causing deep fractures from whose repercussions we are suffering up until now. As a result of this violent shock of modernity, the Islamic intelligentsia has divided into three major trends or three kinds of Islamic discourse that still are apparent on the scene nowadays.

The First Trend: It tries to face this violent shock by adhering to the cultural heritage and resorting to the traditional institutions in an attempt to refuse all forms of hostile modernity. This trend is adopted by the majority of scholars and civil groups accustomed to stability and the warmth of intimate relations with the family, the clan, the alley, the district and the like. It is not easy for these scholars and groups to get rid of the inherited customs and traditions or move to the world of unrest and troubled individualism predicted by the sweeping "armed" modernity (with all its impositions).

The Second Trend: It tries to cope with the prevailing Western social and cultural model, with its good and evil, regarding it as the only way of deliverance from the retardation that the Muslims are witnessing in the face of the inescapable modern civilization. This trend, in turn, is divided into two branches:

a. The fifirst branch includes statesmen and military institutions that do not pay attention to intellectual and cultural aspects. They are mainly interested in the best practical ways that require embracing the principles of the modern system, to improve the efficiency of the state's political, administrative and military systems.

b. The second branch has a clear trace of liberalism that has infiltrated as a result of the scientifific missions which were sent to the Western capitals as well as the movements of cultural interaction and translation of European writings. This branch sees no problem in adopting the Western means of development and civilization, assuming that they are perfect examples of the universal human civilization.

The Third Trend (Our Main Topic): It tries to face this violent shock by a kind of Islamic wakefulness attempting to go back to the Islamic sources and fundamentals represented in the Glorious Qur'ân, the Prophetic *Sunnah* and the heritage of the righteous *Salaf*(i.e., early Muslim scholars). This trend is discontented with merely dwelling on the past, ignoring *Ijtihâd* (i.e., legal reasoning and discretion), not exploiting the tools of modern civilization and not coping with the spirit of the age. It is known that the modern civilization meant by the Islamic reformers is represented basically in the Western modern civilization, which is seen in the luxurious Western cities like Paris, London and Vienna where it has been established for a while.

The figures of Islamic reform have tried, since the times of Gamâlud-Dîn Al-Afghânî, Muhammad 'Abduh, Rashîd Ridâ, Shakîb Arslân and their students, to make a combination between the fundamentals of Islam and the tools of the modern Western civilization used in administration, industry, curricula, etc. Though most of the men of this trend be long to traditional educational institutions and are well-versed in various branches of traditional Islamic knowledge, such as *Fiqh*, *Usûl* and poetry, they have tried, to different degrees, to inject their traditional culture with some modern Western knowledge and broaden their minds. Also, the great disorder afflicting the Muslim societies, due to the Western occupational wave and these reformers' increasing fears of the dangers awaiting Islam and Muslims, has forced them to engage in the world of politics, regardless of its costly complexities and conflicts and in a direct way contradictory to the way of the early traditional scholars and old educational institutions.

It is important here to note that this distinction between these three trends is not decisive since there is some interrelation among them. For example, the traditionalists have been influenced, in one way or another, by the pressures of the time that have forced them to use some of the tools of modernity. Likewise, the reformers are not completely isolated from the traditional culture and institutions nor are they separated from the liberal trends that have gone beyond their control. As for the liberals, they are not completely isolated from the Islamic culture and the conditions of the Muslim societies.

The new Muslim reformers have suffered, in one way or another, from what could be called "awareness anxiety", resulting from the catastrophic challenges generated by the Western invasion of the Muslim world. They have also suffered from a sense of alienation and even mutual estrangement from the traditional groups and institutions which have accused them of

breaking away from the *Ijmâ'* (i.e., consensus of the nation) and unjustifiably accepting the doctrine of the victorious (i.e. those who presently have the upper-hand). In spite of the fact that the thought of this trend is not free from some kind of worrying generalizations and amalgamations, it represents the real beginning of the new Islamic discourse, trying to achieve a balance between the fixed principles of Islam and the latest developments of the age.

Due to the prominent efforts of the Islamic reformers since the late 19th century, the Islamic trend has managed to interact with the "world of modernity" and enter its institutions, especially the educational ones, after being confined only to the traditional institutions. It has also managed to have a place in towns and big cities after it used to be imprisoned within villages and remote areas. Thus, it has become easy for the Muslims to evade the shackles of being considered as only belonging to a tribe or sect, release themselves from traditional systems and communicate with the modern world and its institutions, depending on their own religion, language and cultural symbols, unlike many other nations on whom the choice between adopting a "withered" local culture or adopting the overwhelming Westernization trend has been imposed.

Currently, it is noticeable that Islam has a strong presence in the different public and social institutions, especially the modern ones. This is an accomplishment definitely attributed to the efforts made by the modern Islamic reformation that has tried to restore Islam and revive its influence with the aim of reconnecting its role to the present reality and the latest changes of the age, relying on the principle of *Ijtihâd* and denouncing the practice of mere imitation and rigidity that used to be prevalent among the majority of Muslims.

The reformation movement has made strenuous restoration efforts to create a relation between the Islamic movement and the tremendous political and intellectual developments imposed by the Western occupation of Muslim countries. This trend has tried to renew Islam in the light of its sources and general principles. While this trend adheres to Islamic fundamentals, it rejects imitation and rigidity; and while this trend clings to Islam, it pays much attention to the concerns of the age. This trend has made great contributions to take the language of Islam and its sciences out of the traditional educational institutions to the heart of the modern educational and social ones and from the old-fashioned language to a simple modern one. It should be noted that this Islamic trend of revival still affects and influences the extensive Muslim world in various ways. This emphasizes

that the task of reformation undertaken by the reformation movement since the middle of the 19th century has not been fully fulfilled or completed yet. Hence, it is necessary to detect and cure the defects and shortcomings in both intellect and action experienced in the way of trying to fulfill this task.

Unlike the former reformative attempts in Islamic political history, the modern reformation movement is clearly aware of the dual state of underdevelopment and progress in comparison to the modern, developed West.

Also, unlike the early reformers until those of the 18th century, who used to judge the conditions of underdevelopment and social and moral backwardness according to the Islamic "historic model" and the great values of Islam, the new Islamic reformers have added a new factor; namely, judging underdevelopment and deterioration according to the modern civilization represented by the modern developed West, who enjoy luxurious cities, industrial power, advanced technology and modern armament. The famous thesis written by Shakîb Arslân under the title of "Why have the Muslims retarded while the others have progressed?" reflects the change in the historic awareness of the Islamic intelligentsia. "The others" meant by Shakîb Arslân in his thesis are not China, Japan or India, but they refer to Paris, London and Vienna.

In this sense, we can say, "While the efforts of the early Muslim reformers, including Waliyul-lâh Ad-Dahlawî in India, Muhammad Ibn `Abdul- Wahhâb in the Arabian Peninsula and As-Sunûsî in Libya in the 18th century, are regarded as part of the Islamic cognitive and historical continuity, the modern reformative movement represented by Al-Afghânî, Muhammad `Abduh and their followers has an overlapping dual dimension. On one hand, this modern reformative movement is clearly aware of the dilemma of the Muslims' backwardness and deterioration compared to the former Muslims' glory and the great values of Islam hidden in Muslims' minds and souls. On the other hand, it is thoroughly aware of the unprecedented superiority of the West over the Muslim world.

We have discussed the Islamic reformative trend in details more than other matters, since its relative discourse has added much to the development of Islamic discourse, especially the strong historic awareness of the necessity that Muslims must awake from their heedlessness and face the new challenges imposed by the changes of the Islamic political conditions and the occurrence of new, unprecedented challenges. Accordingly, any serious efforts must be built on the earlier efforts made by the modern reformative movement.

Aspects of the Islamic Discourse Crisis
Intellectual Emptiness

The contemporary Islamic constitution suffers from a great shortage of production of significant knowledge that has caused it to lose the required balance between intellectual performance and dynamic political activity.

The Islamic constitution is like a huge body with a small head; namely, although the Islamic stance has a strong presence within various social and public sectors, it seems intellectually barren. Of course, this does not mean that the Islamic arena is devoid of any serious intellectual effort or that it lacks people of knowledge and scholars. Yet, the problem lies in the lack of communication which is required between dynamic political performance and intellectual cognitive efforts. This goes back to our deep involvement in dynamic political activity at the cost of intellectual and cognitive efficiency.

Certainly, the tense political atmospheres, from which the modern Islamic trend has emerged, and the dangers and challenges that the Muslim world faced and still faces have imposed heavy burdens and responsibilities on the Islamic trend which is beyond its capability and experience. We should also not forget that the terrible political emptiness, resulting from suspending the Caliphate system of rule, and the escalated crises and intensity of dangers that have faced and still face the Muslim world have caused the major political burdens to turn from the official track of the state to nongovernmental political groups. Thus, it is not strange that the modern Islamic trend simultaneously emerged with the declaration of the end of the Islamic political "legality" represented by the Islamic Caliphate in Istanbul.

The institutional emptiness, from which most Islamic countries suffer today due to the disintegration of the traditional social and educational organizations, whether resulting from inheriting what was left by occupation or the thoughtless modernization policies adopted by elites calling for independence, has caused the Islamic nation to undergo intellectual and institutional emptiness. Consequently, it lacks the solid cognitive base necessary to regulate its movement and rectify its actions.

There could have been an excuse for the contemporary Islamic trend as regards the heavy political burdens and responsibilities imposed on it if only there was some, or even a little, support between the intellectual vision and the political movement. A problem, however, arises when there is too

wide a gap between the area of intellect and that of political practices. It is strange that some Islamic elites have been excluded, marginalized and greatly oppressed. This is despite the fact that they have grown up in the Islamic political state and they could have helped narrow this gap and build a bridge between the intellect and political practices. Moreover, the political movement is afflicted with poor insight.

One of the most dangerous and direct effects of this phenomenon is that some Islamic trends have become unaware of their priorities as well as the nature of their huge responsibilities. Furthermore, these trends lack the sense of awareness that they need to deal with the needs and requirements of the status quo. Hence, they may engage in premature, unjustifiable battles and repeat the same mistakes committed by former intellectual and political movements, without making any use of their experience. Moreover, they are characterized by recession and rigidity due to the absence of deep intellectual insight and of elites qualified to guide and rationalize the political movement. A significant proof of this is the negligence or marginalization related to the field of thinking and research on the part of most Islamic trends, taking into account that knowledge has become an inseparable part of power and rule.

The emergence of fanatic trends from within the Islamic arena has caused the aggravation of the situation. These trends have an apparent inclination to accuse people of disbelief and a strong tendency to use violence. They do not hesitate to carry weapons and use them even unjustifiably.

Besides, they are intellectually and politically characterized by narrow-mindedness and a lack of sufficient awareness of the equations of conflict and the balance of power in both the countries they work in and at the international level. An example of this is their inclination to use violence and engage in conflicts exceeding their capabilities and, consequently, ending up being defeated and disunited. Due to their nar row-mindedness and unawareness of the complex world policies, these trends cannot manage conflicts rationally. They even fail to achieve internal accord among Muslims and unify them because of their inclination to accuse people of disbelief.

This is why such experiments usually lead to bad ramifications, not only for these trends, but also for the whole Islamic entity as well as the stability of Islamic communities and peace among the people in general.

This is clear in the Algerian, Egyptian and Afghan examples. One may not doubt the truthfulness and faith of these trends; however; faith alone is not enough unless accompanied by a soundness of mind and insight.

The most dangerous characteristic of these trends is their rushing tendency to accuse people opposing them of disbelief and judge those with different opinions of being innovators in religion. In addition, they do not hesitate to carry weapons and may engage in killing people who are protected by the honorable *Sharî'ah*. Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***Because of that, We decreed upon the Children of Israel that whoever kills a soul unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land - it is as if he had slain mankind entirely. And whoever saves one - it is as if he had saved mankind entirely. And our messengers had certainly come to them with clear proofs. Indeed many of them, [even] after that, throughout the land, were transgressors.***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table): 32]

Hence, the oft-repeated statement indicating that the world is divided into two divisions, belief and disbelief, may turn later into severe contradicting trends within the Islamic entity itself. These trends begin with a series of exclusions until they have nothing but the small, pure minority.

These fanatic groups are not concerned with finding the common factors; instead, they have a great interest in finding factors for rupture and separation. This way, they represent projects of sectarian and doctrinal wars and limitless political conflicts. The dangers of these trends increase as the region has doctrinal, religious and ethnic variations, not to mention crises and conflicts. Accordingly, the region is in a bad need for a comprehensive thought that can encompass its problems and suggest suitable solutions.

Moreover, our region urgently needs a spirit of unity that can strengthen its structure and unify it under one umbrella. Such thought should be capable of unifying efforts and favoring the good over the evil, the more important over the less important, and the common over the different. This thought should replace the simplistic fanatic one that is unaware of the complexities of policies and international relations, and ignorant of the conditions of Muslim communities.

In spite of the fact that these Islamic trends constitute their intellectual and ideological legitimacy on religious bases, and their leaders use religious slogans, they are really more like the romantic and revolutionary groups that appeared in the 19th century due to the Western modernity.

This is very clear in their pragmatic intellect that does not hesitate to use violence and modern technology to achieve certain political gains.

Moreover, these trends have radical tendencies to change the world by willful rash actions that do not differentiate between possible and impossible matters.

The recovery of nations from backwardness requires sound thought, pure souls and hard work. To illustrate, thought will motivate individuals to work seriously and effectively, and work will urge them to utilize more effective thought along with insight. The big problem the Muslim World faces today is the absence of the connection between thought and work. Subsequently, thought has been turned into patterns that have no connection with reality, while work has been submitted to some material childish knowledge.

A simple comparison between the modern Western renaissance and the state of the Islamic revival shows the great differences between the two experiments. That is, the West entered into "modernity" with a great intellectual and philosophical revolution along with a good implementation of a political and economical renaissance that helped Europe get rid of feudality or the "Dark Ages" and gave it the chance to extend its external expansion to accumulate more wealth and gain glory.

As for the Muslims, the tremendous political developments witnessed in the Muslim World at large were not accompanied by an intellectual or scientific movement. Moreover, the absence of the role of the Muslim *Faqîh* and scholar and the dissolution of the traditional educational institution have greatly aggravated the dilemma. Accordingly, the Islamic political movement has gone astray since the free and open thought of the Muslim community has become paralyzed, and dialogue and *Ijtihâd* have disappeared in favor of superficial thought and ideological stereotypes.

The Wide Gap between Reality and Ambition:

The contemporary Islamic discourse suffers from some kinds of unrealistic utopianism. The reason may be that the contemporary Islamic discourse is still feeding on the ancient *Fiqhî* heritage without realizing the size of the gap between the past and present of Muslims. We should not forget that the jurisprudential corpus, the Islamic fundamentalism and the rich Islamic political concepts (called "*Shar'î* politics") were formed during the political dominance of the Muslims. Thus, they reflected the Islamic superiority and responded to the historical needs of Muslims. However, the discontinuity of the line of the great Islamic history, the conversion of the conditions of the Muslims and the transfer of world leadership to the predominant Western countries has made it impossible to apply the opinions of the early Muslims to the status quo of Muslims today.

Among the aspects of the above-mentioned dilemma is the state of huge schism from which Islamic discourse and the Muslim awareness in

general suffer. That is, the Islamic discourse is wavering between its glorious past history and political dominance over the world from one side, and its current weak status quo and repeated defeats before the foreign forces on the other side. Accordingly, the Islamic historical heritage often hinders us from understanding the status quo and its complexities. This is why one observes Islamic discourse jumping from the present to the past without realizing the historical differences. In addition, the discourse clings to the past and engages in its issues and problems at the expense of the present and its current problems.

Unlike other nations who have been badly affected by the culture of the victorious, the tremendous rich historical and cognitive heritage the Muslims own is undoubtedly one of the most important factors that were and still are maintaining the constituents of existence for the Muslims, giving them self-confidence. Unfortunately, when the attentive "historical sense" stops interacting with this heritage, it turns into a heavy burden and a great obstacle that hinders its people from understanding the status quo and coping with the spirit of the age.

To clarify matters, one can say, "The problem does not lie in history or heritage itself; rather, it lies in the ways of dealing with them." In fact, if we trace the events of Islamic discourse, we will notice that many of its issues have nothing to do with the Islamic status quo. Actually, such issues and topics are either derived from the controversies of the early Muslims or they are just a monotonous repetition of others' questions and answers.

The situation is aggravated when the views of the early Muslims are quoted, away from their historical and cognitive contexts, and then applied to other completely different issues. An example of this is the recalling old controversies among theological or juristic schools, though such controversies are no longer meaningful since they represent historical disagreements between the Mutazilites and Al-Ashâ`irah, between the *Salaf* and Muslim theologians, between jurists and philosophers, and so on. Another example is the raising of controversial issues concerning the Divine Self and Divine Attributes (of Allah), and the theory of obligation and free choice.

Nevertheless, we do not call for a detachment from our glorious history or great Islamic heritage as it is undoubtedly a source of pride and dignity for this nation which is united by adherence to the honorable *Sharî`ah*. Instead, we call for an insightful and active dealing with this heritage and making good use of it. We should differentiate between the obligatory matters that

require obedience and the matters subject to *Ijtihâd* that require thinking and contemplation. Moreover, we do not call for neglecting the meanings of the religion or corrupting the fundamentals of the firm Islamic *Sharî'ah* under the pretext of renewal and fake development. Rather, we invite to boost the mentality of awareness and show no fear when insightfully tackling the issues of our religion as well as our current problems.

What distinguishes the developed nations from the underdeveloped ones is their ability to make use of their symbolic and historical heritage when dealing with the present problems. This way, the past becomes an inspirer to the present and the successors benefit from the predecessors.

On the contrary, the underdeveloped nations confine themselves to their historical heritage as if it is capturing their minds.

One of the problems afflicting the contemporary Islamic discourse is that it neglects the status quo and takes instead ready-made solutions.

That is, whenever a Muslim faces a problem, he hurries to the heritage books to find the pre-made solutions instead of exerting efforts to submit the problem to the status quo. Instead of being objects of meditation and reconsideration, the historical texts become stereotype patterns to which the current issues are forcibly submitted.

In addition, preoccupation with the historical models and ideals often gives priority to utopian ambitions over real capabilities. As a result, we may act irrationally, avoiding a sense of proportion, evaluation between the gains and losses, and a will to understand the balance of powers. For instance, there is a lack of the spirit of gradation and priorities as well as in understanding and applying the golden *Shar'î* rule that averting evil takes precedence over bringing benefit and that the lesser of the two evils should be chosen, etc.

It is obvious that the wide gap between the Muslims' actual abilities and their current status with regard to the balance of power on the one hand, and their glorious history on the other hand has two connotations. The first is that the Arab Muslim Nation is still alive and has the will of revival, in spite of its setbacks. It has not surrendered to the oppressive balance of powers that works in the other's favor. Also, it has not submitted to international military, political and economical dominance. On the contrary, there were other more powerful nations that surrendered to the victors and accepted their inferior status, like Japan and Germany after World War II. However, the Arab Muslim Nation's glorious history often affects its vision of the status quo and the current needs.

One of the factors that explain such an "explosive accumulation" witnessed by the extensive Muslim World is its rich history and the great historical ambitions that Muslims used to have. In other words, these historical aspects may sometimes turn into an irrational explosive energy that induces the Western writers to talk about the conflict of civilizations, mainly the Western and Islamic civilizations. Besides, they have accused Islam of being a religion that calls for violence, bloodshed and killing of the innocent, and hindering the process of implanting the values of tolerance and coexistence.

These may be the reasons behind the presence of resistance movements and the successive rejection witnessed in the Muslim World. Moreover, the spirit of uprising and refusal is implanted in the Islamic character. Without such a glorious spirit of sacrifice, which is implanted as a basic constituent in the Muslim character, the Muslims would have vanished, as happened to the Red Indians in North America and many other extinct nations that failed to defy the power imposed upon them by dominating nations.

Yet, these historical ambitions, accompanied with a historical memory full of glories and victories, usually turn into an irrational explosive energy that does not suitably deal with the status quo or understand the influential balances of power. Accordingly, some Islamic groups understand the religious and heritage texts incorrectly and choose theoretical issues that have no relation to reality. They wage battles that exceed their abilities and engage in ill-timed conflicts bringing disasters on themselves and on the whole Muslim Nation.

Having religious certitude and firm belief in their case, some Islamic groups may imagine that they own the keys of the world, and thus they can turn the balance of power upside down and shorten the circle of history very quickly. Instead of studying reality and understanding its effective powers, they just recall some of the religious texts and historical events to justify their inflamed emotional rashness. Hence, it is not strange to see these groups turn on their heels when they face the realities of life.

To sum up, the Muslim World, with its dynamic powers, has a great potentiality and superior will of sacrifice that can hardly be found in the other nations of the world. This potentiality plays an important role in maintaining the nation's identity and protecting its entity from the blind international power. This potentiality, however, is in bad need to collaborate with the faculty of diagnosis and understanding of reality with all its complexities. Otherwise, it will turn into rash actions that cannot differentiate between the possible and the impossible. Moreover, the

inflamed historical ambitions overwhelming Muslims hearts and souls may be destructive unless they are accompanied by a state of historical awareness that realizes the laws of history and humanity.

Local-Oriented Discourse versus World-Oriented Discourse:

The Islamic discourse is characterized by being self-oriented instead of being human and universal. That is why it is not strange that the Islamic discourse does not tackle the problems facing humanity today. As a result, you may think that the Muslims are not concerned with world issues and crises that afflict humanity and threaten its whole entity, such as the issues of globalization, environment, social disintegration, the culture of violence and dominance, and the like.

The essence of the Islamic Message has been built to include all humanity as it is the universal call of Allah, the Almighty. In this connection, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾***O mankind, indeed We have created you from male andfemale and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.***﴿ [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments): 13]

Yet, the contemporary Islamic discourse is preoccupied with local moral concerns at the expense of the efforts exerted to achieve the universal purposes of existence. Most of the writings in the Muslim World today are not up to the level of scientific worthiness and competence and are not accepted internationally. This is not only due to the poor content and bad presentation of issues but also due to the fact that these writings do not focus on human affairs, concerns and cares.

Moreover, the state of immutability that has afflicted the Islamic *Fiqhî* corpus due to the gap between it and the Muslims' daily life and society has greatly aggravated this situation. Therefore, it is natural to witness a state of cognitive confusion that characterizes various fields of Islamic knowledge, whether in linguistic terminology, concepts or semantics.

This state of confusion comes in parallel with the general state of disorder characterizing the Islamic social and political aspects. The movement of juristic *Ijtihâd*, which was related to the Muslims' life, has turned into mere individual efforts having nothing to do with the Muslims' daily life, the universal concerns or human interests. Such a movement used to be guided by specialized scientific institutions which would accumulate

their efforts and deeply implant their traditions over many centuries. Today, there is a wide gap between the Islamic *Fiqh* and the Muslims' public life, especially in the fields of politics and public affairs. Accordingly, Islamic *Fiqh* has turned away from tackling the status quo which, in turn, has become separated from the spirit of religion and become no longer a field of induction and religious *Ijtihâd*.

Generally speaking, the Islamic discourse suffers two corrupt trends. The first trend is represented in imitating and monotonously repeating the sayings of the early Muslim scholars, while the second one can be seen in imitating the others and following their example under the pretext of false universal modernity. In spite of the abundant terms innovated by "modernizers," and their lengthy talks about the virtue of creativity and criticism, they are rarely creative. In fact, they depend on others and put burdens on serious and creative thought.

There is a strange paradox between the sublime Islamic moral values that work in favor of the universal human destiny and the self-oriented Islamic discourse moving within narrow limits which do not go beyond the doctrine, the sect, the country or the Muslim Nation at the most. As a result, there is no attention given to conveying the meanings of the Divine mercy to all humankind.

Today, there is an urgent need to introduce a firm Islamic discourse that shows the universal Islamic values as well as the meanings of the Divine mercy. Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***And We have not sent you, [O Muhammad], except as a mercy to the worlds.***﴾ [Al-Anbiyâ' (The Prophets):107]

This need is especially aroused in this globalized age which is characterized by nihilistic tendencies and secular pragmatism.

When considering the trends of the Western and international awareness in general, one notices an increasing flow of secular or atheistic trends due to the absence of values that control and guide the self. Globalization, which is based on controlling markets and accompanied by a practical and pragmatic vision of the universe and humanity, is the most common expression of the spread of the secular atheistic values that coincide with the absence of directing factors and major aims. That is, the religious motives were replaced by a harsh mental tendency that was associated, in its early stages, with Jewish and Christian heritages. Under the pressure of the extensive capitalistic machine and the philosophies of existential anxiety, this

secular outlook vanished to pave the way for an extreme nihilistic tendency that crushed the remains of religion and the mind. This inordinate atheistic tendency is but a part of the modernity project.

The conflict arising in our Muslim World today and the unfair claims declaring that Islam fights the values of the age and feeds terrorism represent the mask that conceals the extreme ambitions and ill intentions of the Western forces. These intentions can be witnessed in the destruction of the remaining forts standing in the face of secularization and globalization, which regard the economic welfare as the high principle and the pragmatic man as the most ideal person. In other words, the atheistic values have spread throughout the world and the power of globalization, with its huge media and propagandistic abilities, has increased. Besides, some countries have, willingly and unwillingly, followed the Western globalized and secularized example; yet, the Islamic region has maintained a good deal of its symbolic and spiritual independence.

We will not be exaggerating if we say that our present age is the time of dissolution of major fundamentals (i.e., the religious, moral, scientific and political ones) on which the modern Western awareness and sociology were built. This is because the confidence in these major fundamentals has been shaken, and this has resulted in a kind of frivolous interpretation having no meanings or values. This is what Jean Francois Lyotard, a French intellectual and a "post-modernity" theorist, described as the end of his lengthy narratives. By this he meant the end of the basic values and major fundamentals on which the Western experience of modernity was built.

Among these fundamentals were a solid mentality, progressive tendency and belief in human subjectivism. These were replaced by an interpretative Nietzschean tendency (named after the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche) aiming at disintegrating the intellect and stripping the world of its contents, i.e., turning it into a mere frivolous interpretative game with no meanings or goals.

There is no doubt that the future of Islam and the world around us will be determined by the solutions offered by the Islamic discourse as alternatives to the single materialistic movement of globalization which overwhelms both the Western wing of the world, with its severe materialistic principles, and the Eastern Asian wing of the world, with its excessively spiritual ones. The globalization movement that takes economic welfare as a high principle and the pragmatic man as a tool represents the

perfection of the unrestricted Eastern and Western forms of materialistic secularization. This secularization aims to reach all parts of the world, exceeding all geographical, intellectual and religious boundaries.

When measured by the economic growth, scientific development or presence in the international equation, we can hardly find any place for the Muslim World. Besides, most of the expansive Muslim World is in one way or another dominated by the Western political and economic influences.

However, the Muslims have managed to keep a considerable deal of their symbolic and spiritual independence, which is an essential condition for any serious revival project.

We have discussed so far the aspects of the problem facing Western awareness. This problem has become international due to the widespread influence and huge power the modern West has. We have also discussed the problem that faces contemporary civilization as well as its need for the light of Divine guidance. Indeed, Islam, with its spiritual depth and universal aims, is the main source able to offer solutions that can save humanity from going astray. Nevertheless, there is still a challenge facing the Muslim intelligentsia; namely, how to form a firm Islamic discourse that can confront these challenges and offer Islamic solutions. This heavy mission may be left to the next Muslim generations. Perhaps they may be more capable than us to offer the most suitable and solid Islamic discourse.

The Preoccupying Thought of the Islamic State:

Since its early stages, contemporary Islamic discourse has been preoccupied with the idea of reestablishing the Muslim state. This goes back to the violent shock left by the Western occupation and the resulting successive breakup of the civil consensus and foundations of the traditional legality.

The dissolution of the Ottoman Caliphate in Turkey in 1925 and the declaration of a secularized state resulted in political problems, topped by the demand of reestablishing an Islamic state as a first priority on the agenda of the contemporary Islamic trend.

Thus, it was not strange to witness the emergence of the modern Islamic movement in the Arab world a few years after the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and Kamal Atatork's assumption of power in the Ottoman capital. Another reason of such emergence was the formation of a vision denying the relation between religion and policy and even denying the Islamic state itself. This vision sprang from the traditional educational institution. We all still remember the fuss caused by the book entitled "*Al- Islâm wa Usûl Al-Hukm*"

(Islam and the Fundamentals of Ruling) by 'Alî 'Abdur-Râzik inside Al-Azhar as well as the other Islamic intellectual circles. This fuss resulted in wide reactions that aimed at refuting 'Alî 'Abdur-Râzik's opinions and confirming the relation between Islam and political affairs.

In an attempt to fight this wave aiming at separating Islam from political affairs and concerns, the contemporary Islamic discourse tended to chant the slogan of "the Islamic state" and dye it with a good deal of moral and political values. We should note that the modern Islamic political trend has been influenced by the dominant political culture in the Arab region and the international arena in general. It is a culture that focuses on achieving political, economic and social modernization throughout all the systems of the state. Thus, it was not strange that the speech of the independent intelligentsia in the Arab world, after the withdrawal of the Western occupational troops and the establishment of the "national entities", focused on "the state" as the guarantor of economical, developmental and political freedom, as well as the only way to catch up with the ideal Western civilization.

Moreover, the Communist model in Russia, the Fascistic model in Italy and the French Revolution have attracted the modernizing independent intelligentsia in the Muslim World as well as the Third World in general.

Nasser's experiment in Egypt, Boumedienne's experiment in Algeria, the Ba'ath's experiment in Iraq and Syria, and Bourguiba's experiment in Tunisia represented prominent examples of this tendency.

Though the Islamic trend did not have good relations with the political trends of secularization and the independent movements (with some variation in the nature of these relations in every Muslim Country), it did not isolate itself from the political and cultural atmospheres where it occurred and worked, including the political culture of the Arab intelligentsia.

What aggravates the situation is that the contemporary Islamic discourse tends to Islamize the divided state, which has inherited many crises and dilemmas from the heavy occupational phase. This is done by Islamizing the laws and general aspects of the state and then describing it as an "Islamic" state. That is, when the advocates of Islamization talk about the Islamic state, they usually mean to Islamize the local political entities within which they move. They just apply the sayings of the *Shar'î* policy and the Caliphate model – as stated by the early jurists and fundamentalists – to the modern divided state. As for those who call for reestablishing the early unified Muslim state, such as the Liberation Party, they long for an almost utopian model, away from the political status quo with its current problems.

We should not forget that one of the most important slogans that aroused the feelings of the youth of the Islamic front in Algeria, for example, and inflamed their zeal was the one relating to "the Islamic state".

They aimed to Islamize the independent state inherited by the National Liberation Front after the withdrawal of the French occupation. They believed that this state violated the principles of Islam as well as the Algerian Revolution and wasted the sacrifices of the Muslim fighters. Likewise, when some of the Sudanese Islamists talk about the Islamic state, they mean the Mahdi state passed to them from the British mandate regime.

In this connection, we do not need to talk about the well-known Iranian Islamists who inherited a state heavy with national traditions and worked on putting it in the frame of the Shiitic Imamate (leadership).

The Islamic discourse has not been aware enough of the great dangers of the modern state with its huge security and military systems and administrative organizations. Moreover, it is not aware of this state's current massive abilities of control or the historical gap between the historical model of the ancient Sultanate state and the divided state resulting from Western occupation. Further, the Islamic discourse is not aware of the difference between the terms of the Sultanate or the Imamate discussed in the literature of legal policies and the nature of the divided state left by the occupation. That is why Islamic discourse is seen as an inconsistent mixture of the remains of the ancient "literature of the Sultanate" and the modern political adaptations under "the Islamic state".

The modern state has been established on inclusive extensive principles, such as the absolute sovereignty of the state and the total obedience and submission to it. Accordingly, the tools of violence and methods of practicing such violence are monopolized by the state within the frame of "the legal use of violence" as stated by the German sociologist, Max Weber.

In this regard, we should not look at the modern state in its Western democratic garment or its liberal luxurious picture since they represent aspects inherited from World War II and do not give a clear picture of the complicated historical track or even the terrifying bloody one that accompanied the establishment of the modern national state.

The modern state is like a deaf machine that has its own coercive dictatorial mentality which does not care much about its ideologies, the moral or religious demands it calls for or for the kind of its influential figures. Such a state is only concerned with fulfilling the principle of practical efficiency

and guaranteeing discipline and full control over its subjects through secret or even open coercion. Thus, we notice that this state aims at marginalizing religion and employing everything to assure autocracy.

The contemporary Islamic discourse has been accompanied by a good deal of utopianism concerning its idea about politicians in general and the topic of the state in particular. Many Islamists think that the Islamic state can solve all the problems from which the Islamic entity suffers, and can achieve huge dreams and ambitions. This matter becomes very serious when such a state is regarded as the reliable protector of religion and the voice of the nation. That way, the religion and the interests of the society become merged into the state.

We should take into consideration that the attention paid to politicians in general and the state in particular is one of the main aspects of modern political secularization based upon reinforcing the role of politicians in reformulating the conditions of human existence and re-organizing the social structure through programmed political actions. This attention has been greatly increased by the totalitarian trends. Here, one can say that the shortest way to secularize Islam is to shorten its list of targets and priorities in favor of the state.

The problem is that no sooner do the Islamists try to establish such a pattern of the state than they get shocked by the width of the gap between the utopian ideas and reality, between the idea of the desired Islamic state and the present crises and pressures imposed upon them by a heavy international regime holding the reins of economic, political and military powers. That way, their dreams turn into the worst nightmares.

The Islamic state, meant to be the magic wand for Islamizing society and getting over the historical inertia from which the Islamic existence has suffered throughout the last three centuries, has burdened the project of the Islamists themselves. That way, the Islamic state becomes the noblest and greatest goal for which everything can be sacrificed. That is, in spite of the internal and external dangers and pressures, keeping this state has become the highest priority. On the other hand, the Islamic intelligentsia who have engaged in politics while bearing noble spiritual and moral purity have turned into pragmatic professional politicians. The experiments of the Islamists in some Arab countries are evident examples illustrating this point.

The modern national state, regardless of its intellectual or dogmatic identity, does not incarnate moral or political virtues; rather, it embodies particular interests and powers. We should take into account that any state has natural tendencies towards expansion and domination, regardless of

the influential figures of such tendencies as well as their moral and religious commitments. For this reason in particular, we should think of the state as the greatest evil, even though it is unavoidable. Therefore, we have to resist its immoderation and prevent it from dominating the society and religion. In other words, instead of sanctifying the state, we should try to alleviate its pressures and refute its totalitarian claims of representing the religion and political groups. In addition, we should work to transfer as many of the state's responsibilities to independent civil organizations and leave only those necessary for managing the political society.

There is no doubt that the Islamic moral and spiritual system reveals the strong connection between religion and politics, provided that we understand the concept of "politics" in its general and comprehensive sense that goes beyond the inclusive sense of the concept of the "state".

This strong connection between religion and politics is, according to Muhammad Iqbâl, attributed in one of its sides to the fact that Islam does not separate between religion and politics, just like the body includes both matter and soul.

The relation between the politician and the man of religion is a strong one that springs from the religious structure itself. The state is just a crossing point where the man of religion and the politician meet. It is not, however, the only or the main crossing point due to the following two reasons:

First: The field of politics in Islam is wider than that of the state. It is related to the authority and its responsibilities since the concept of the authority is not restricted to the core of the state, as is the case with traditional Marxism. Rather, this concept goes far to include all forms of social and political systems that are related to the general Islamic destiny.

Second: The major strategies of Islam and its historical experience are more effective and wider than "the state", which often represents a burden on it. Accordingly, if we strip Islam of the dimension of the state – as called for by some groups of the Mutazilites and Kharijites, which is a utopian and even an anarchic idea, of course – it cannot be stripped of the political dimension, which is related to the destiny of the Islamic nation and the handling of its worldly affairs, and which overlaps, in turn, with the spiritual and dogmatic dimensions.

For this reason in particular, the Sunni Islamic political thought considers the political question as a part of the circle of interests and means, not a part of the circle of fundamentals and aims. This helps us also understand the historical settlement which the fundamental and juristic

thought reached after the failure of the political rebellion attempts, which caused severe damages to the structure of the Islamic political entity. This settlement ended with accepting the legality of the dominating ruler provided that he recognizes and adheres to the general frame of the Islamic *Sharî'ah* (i.e., Islamic Law). Moreover, many of the ruler's religious and political responsibilities should be redirected to the Islamic civil and voluntary institutions. In other words, the *Faqîhs*, despite the reservations about their concerns of the so-called *Fitnah* (i.e., dissension) or the solutions they reach, should have a deep awareness of the broad definition of "politics" and should not restrictt it to the core of the state.

The Islamic discourse needs to be internally revised and its priorities have to be rearranged. That is, the value of society should be favored over that of the state; the value of education over that of law; and the value of reform over that of punishment and deterrence. In this respect, live experience has proved that reaching power by means of the state carries a lot of risks and challenges that go far beyond the presence of opposition itself. This does not mean leaving "the state" option in favor of the pure *Sufi* tendency. Rather, it means that we should consider the political priorities within the project of the comprehensive Islamic renaissance. This necessitates paying much attention to the dangers of depending on the state since it has mechanisms of compulsion and suppression that may be bigger than the will of its active figures themselves. In addition, there is a state dominance that does not leave any room for any Islamic rational and balanced experiment.

All these factors drive Islamic discourse to reconsider its concentration on achieving an Islamic state and to look into the Muslims' reality with a piercing eye, away from utopian wishes and dreams. After all, this generation, or may be the next generations, of the Islamic leaders and intellectuals have to answer a set of major questions, among which are the following:

To what extent can we "Islamize" this blind, huge machine called "the modern national state"? How far can we reconcile between this huge state that has imposed itself for the last five centuries through its wars and bloody borders on one side, and the moral, religious demands for which the Muslims call for on the other side? How far can we Islamize these small political entities we have inherited from the occupational era, or rely on them to achieve the desired Islamic renaissance? Which priority is more important for the Islamic efforts, the state or the issue of rebuilding the Islamic civil society which is independent of the state?

Conclusion

In this research paper, we have shed light on some aspects of Islamic discourse that reflect its present dilemma. We have also done our best to find ways of treatment. However, the scientific methodology and objectivity require us to avoid comprehensive and general claims. In other words, we have not covered all the aspects of this extensive dilemma that afflicts the Islamic status quo in both its social affairs and discourse.

Moreover, we do not claim that we have discovered magic and perfect solutions necessary for overcoming this dilemma. Nevertheless, we have exerted our utmost to find solutions and ways of treatment. One of the most significant conditions required to get rid of the defects that characterize the contemporary Islamic discourse is to give preponderance to the spirit of balancing and comparing, which has been implanted by our Muslim predecessors. Additionally, we should abandon the excessive claim of possessing comprehensive knowledge and perfection.

At the end of this paper, I would like to inform the interested intellectuals of the necessity of accomplishing two factors: reinforcing the spirit of historical awareness when dealing with the problems of our Muslim nation, and reviving hope and the will to work. Further, discussions on this dilemma must not be seen as a factor leading to frustration since a developed nation is known for its ability to turn its problems into motives and defects into points of strength so as to reinforce its presence and enhance its civilizational gains. In this regard, Allah, Gory be to Him, says:

﴿***He said, "O my people, have you considered: if I am upon clear evidence from my Lord and He has provided me with a good provision from Him? And I do not intend to differ from you in that which I have forbidden you; I only intend reform as much as I am able. And my success is not but through Allah. Upon Him I have relied, and to Him I shall return.***﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 88]

Allah, the Almighty, is the One Who bestows success.

Philosophy of Political Discourse

Dr. Fahd Ibn 'Abdur-Rahmân Âl Thânî (*)

We, Muslims, neither advocate war nor approve of harming others. Conversely, Muslims all over the world were overwhelmingly grieved by the September 11 attacks against the innocent people in the USA. Does the American administration, in turn, share the same feelings regarding the afflictions of Muslims in the different parts of the Islamic world, especially the seven million Palestinian refugees that have been expelled from their land for more than half a century?.

When I received an invitation from Qatar's Research and Studies Center at the Ministry of Endowments and Islamic Affairs to write a paper on "The Contemporary Islamic Discourse: A Call for Evaluation and Reconsideration," I found myself in the face of a new challenge that depends not only on strategic, legal, economic and political experience, but also on the linguistic mastery that helps an author form the ideas and deploy them in the right place. While many see that we have contributed in policy, strategy, economy and should be realized that using Arabic concepts properly is the biggest challenge that faces us. After all, we should do our

(*) Associate Professor of Geopolitics and Researcher in Law (Qatar).

best. If we succeed, then we will be doubly rewarded. If, however, we do not, then at least we will have the honor of trying. In this connection, Imâm Ash- Shâfi'î said, "My views are right but they are liable to be wrong, and other people's views are wrong but they may possibly be right."

In this paper, we are going to focus on three aspects.

Firstly: The technique of Islamic discourse.

Secondly: The technique of contemporary discourse.

Thirdly: Manipulating the political terms.

We are going to do our best to explain the various stages of discourse and other means of communication, such as dialogue and negotiation talks, and debate between different cultures. Here, we underline a very essential point that we cannot solve our problems except through dialogue. It is necessary, for the discourse and negotiation to be successful and effective, that the two negotiating partners are equally matched. This does not mean that the two parties should have the same constituents of power, but they should possess commensurate elements of power!

Technique of Islamic Discourse:

First: Discourse in the Glorious Qur'ân

1. The New World of Nûh (i.e. Noah)

Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***And he was constructing the ship, and whenever an assembly of the eminent of his people passed by him, they mocked him. He said, "If you mock us, then we will mock you just as you ridicule us.***﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 38]

When Noah (PBUH) constructed the ark for the new world as Allah commanded him, the sentiment of fatherhood touched his heart. Allah, Glorified be He, says:

﴿***And Noah called to his Lord and said, "My Lord indeed my son is of my family; and indeed, Your promise is true; and You are the most just of the judges!" He said, "O Noah, indeed he is not of your family, indeed, he is [one whose] work was other than righteous, so ask Me not for that about which you have no knowledge. Indeed, I advise you, lest you be***

among the ignorant." [Noah] said, "My Lord, I seek refuge in You from asking that of which I have no knowledge. And unless You forgive me and have mercy upon me, I will be among the losers. ﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd): 45-47]

The above-mentioned verses include many points:

A. Allah's Permission for Noah to move to the new world.

B. Allah decisively states that those who were engaged in the construction of the ark should be among the righteous people. The son of Noah was not righteous, So, Allah, Glorified be He, did not permit him to board the Ark.

C. Ultimately, Allah allowed Noah (PBUH) to disembark and settle in the land. The verse reveals that he will succeed in fulfilling this task, but he will not attain the level of perfection.

We, politicians, realize that the conflict between different contesting powers has always existed since the creation of the earth. The most perilous one is the conflict between Adam (PBUH) and *Iblîs* (i.e. Satan). In this regard, Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿ ***[Iblîs] said, "My Lord! Because You have put me in error, I will surely make [disobedience] attractive to them [i.e. mankind] on earth, and I will mislead them all.*** ﴾ [Al-Hijr (Thamûd's Habitation): 39]

2. The dialogue between Abraham and An-Namrûd

Ibrâhîm (i.e. Abraham) said:

﴿***...My Lord is the one who gives life and causes death...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 258]

An-Namrûd said:

﴿***...I give life and cause death...***﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 258]

Ibrâhîm said, "Do you claim that you give the command to exterminate and set free any one you wish, or that you control the natural causes of life and death?"

An-Namrûd defiantly said, "I control the natural causes of life and death." Ibrâhîm said, "The natural causes are part of the laws of the universe, so which do you control, the first or the latter?"

An-Namrûd said, "I control the laws governing the conditions of the universe!" Ibrâhîm said:

﴿***...Indeed, Allah brings the sun from the east, so bring it from the west..."} So, since you claim you possess the laws of the universe, now prove your power!*** ﴾ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 258]

Allah then asserted Ibrâhîm's victory, saying:

﴾...*So the disbeliever was overwhelmed [by astonishment], and Allah does not guide the wrongdoing people.*﴿ [Al-Baqarah (The Cow): 258]

3. Mûsâ (i.e. Moses) and a New Era (of Faith)

The first command that Allah gave to Mûsâ was to establish the new era of faith. In this connection, Allah, Exalted be He, says:

﴾*Go to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed [i.e. tyrannized]." [Moses] said, "My Lord, expand [i.e. relax] for me my breast [with assurance]. And ease for me my task. And untie the knot from my tongue. That they may understand my speech. And appoint for me a minister [i.e. assistant] from my family - Aaron, my brother. Increase through him my strength. And let him share my task. That we may exalt You much. And remember You much. Indeed, You are of us ever Seeing.*﴿ [Tâ-Hâ: 24-35]

Having given Mûsâ His Commands, or what we call in the modern political science 'the brief ', Allah, Glorified be He, asked him to go to Pharaoh and call him to Islam using the following techniques:

﴾*Go, you and your brother, with My signs and do not slacken in My remembrance. Go, both of you, to Pharaoh. Indeed, he has transgressed. And speak to him with gentle speech that perhaps he may be reminded or fear [Allah].*﴿ [Tâ-Hâ: 42-44]

Thus, Allah gave Mûsâ the permission to establish a new era of faith in a civilized and auspicious manner, taking into account that the earth and all that is on it is not worth a gnat's wing. Sahl Ibn Sa'd As-Sâ'idî narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said:

«*If the world had a value in the sight of Allah equal to that of the wing of a mosquito, He would not have allowed a disbeliever even to drink a mouthful of water from it.*»[1]

The art of discourse should not involve any gesture of intimidation. It should, rather, be convincing and presented in a propitious manner, following Mûsâ's example. When the diplomatic means become fruitless, the person engaging in the dialogue should take a tougher step, till the matter eventually may reach the point of confrontation, especially in decisive issues.

(1) Related by At-Tirmidhî.

As for trivial issues, the wise Muslim usually overlooks them. In the dialogue between Mûsâ and Pharaoh, as an example, Mûsâ (PBUH) followed this approach. Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***And We had certainly given Moses nine evident signs, so ask the Children of Israel [about] when he came to them and Pharaoh said to him, "Indeed I think, O Moses, that you are affected by magic." [Moses] said, "You have already known that none has sent down these [signs] except the Lord of the heavens and the earth as evidence, and indeed I think, O Pharaoh, that you are destroyed." So he intended to drive them from the land, but We drowned him and those with him, all together.***﴾ [Al-Isrâ' (The Night Journey): 101- 103]

Here, the two parties reached the point of confrontation. Pharaoh thought that Mûsâ was bewitched. Thereupon Mûsâ decisively asserted that Pharaoh was doomed and far away from goodness. As Pharaoh set out to annihilate Mûsâ and his followers or drive them out from the land, Allah, Exalted be He, drowned him and his followers.

Here emerge the techniques of discourse and how to approach political dialogue. The discourse gradually evolves from one stage into another until a decisive solution becomes inevitable and your enemy forces you to end the combat, either being victorious or defeated. A Muslim should not turn away from the confrontation; it is a defining characteristic of a coward, and a believer is not a coward.

4. Political Dialogue in Islam Respects the Other's Rights and Status:

The art of discourse requires showing full respect to the other, his status and moral rights. This assists Muslims to smoothly convey the message of Islam to him. In this connection, Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***And to [the people of] Madyan [We sent] their brother Shu'ayb. He said, "O my people, worship Allah; you have no deity other than Him. There has come to you clear evidence from your Lord. So fulfill the measure and weight and do not deprive people of their due, and cause not corruption upon the earth after its reformation. That is better for you, if you should be believers.***﴾ [Al-A'râf (The Battlements): 85]

5. Since the Defeat of Muslims in the Age of Geographic Explorations (15th century A.D.), Muslims have depended on Dialogue to Disseminate Islam

Islam is the most widely spreading religion owing to the tactics of Islamic discourse. Contemporary leaders of the world, like the former

American president, Bill Clinton and the ex-British prime minister, Tony Blair, are amazed to see that Islam is the fastest growing religion in the West. It is a reality![1]

In fact, the spread of Islam in the West is not due to the exertion of extraordinary efforts. On the contrary, it is the fruit of using simple and direct means, i.e. rational dialogue, truthful words and giving a good example. Allah, Glorified be He, says:

{"Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best..."} [An-Nahl (The Bees): 125]

In our book titled ***"The Islamic World"*** we proved that, despite the fall of most Islamic countries under Western imperial power since the beginning of the 20th century and the Western pressure on Muslims up till now, Islam, firstly thanks to Allah's Favor and secondly to the discourse adopted by some Muslim preachers, is the fastest growing religion in the world. In 1900, for instance, Muslims constituted only 12 percent of the world's population while Christians were 33%. In 1980, Muslims became 20% and then 25% in 2000. Meanwhile, the Christian percentage has dropped to 30%[2].

Second: Discourse in the Time of the Prophet (PBUH)

1. The Prophet's Genius Management of Al-Huadaybyah Peace Treaty:

When the two parties, the Muslims and the Polytheists of Quraysh, concluded a peace treaty, the Prophet's reaction to the conditions presented by Quraysh reflected his extreme wisdom and diplomacy, as it is called in modern politics. This can be demonstrated by the following *Hadîth*:

«The Messenger (PBUH) called 'Alî Ibn Abû Tâlib (may Allah be pleased with him) to write the agreement with the Quraysh's delegate. The Messenger said to 'Alî, 'Write: In the Name of Allah, the Entirely Merciful, the Especially Merciful.' Suhayl Ibn 'Amr, the representative of Quraysh, said, 'Stop! I do not know the Entirely Merciful or the Especially Merciful, so write down: Bi Ismika Allahumma (i.e. In Your Name, O Allah).' Then the Messenger said to 'Alî, 'Write: Bi Ismika Allahumma.' The Messenger then said to 'Alî, 'Write, O 'Alî: These are the terms agreed on between Muhammad, Allah's Messenger, and Suhayl Ibn 'Amr.' Suhayl Ibn 'Amr said, 'Stop! If we testify that you are Allah's Messenger, we would not have

(1) Al-'Alyân 'Abdullah, Arab Institution for Studies and Publication, Beirut, 2004.
(2) ÂL Thânî, Fahd , Al-A'dâ, Ar-Râyah, issue (7081-7114).

fought you. So write your name and your father's name.' Allah's Messenger (PBUH) said, 'O `Alî! Erase it and write instead: These are the peace terms agreed to by Muhammad Ibn `Abdullah.' »

The point is that the Prophet (PBUH) wanted to prove to the people of Mecca that Islam is the true message of Allah. The terms of the treaty were as follows:

«*Whoever comes to Muhammad from Quraysh without the permission of his guardian, Muhammad would return him to them, but whoever comes to Quraysh from among the followers of Muhammad, they would not be returned. Whoever wants to ally with Muhammad, Quraysh would not prohibit him; and whoever wants to ally with Quraysh, Muhammad would not prohibit him. Moreover, Muhammad and his Companions would return from Mecca this year but come again the next year and stay there for three days, only bringing their swords.* »

The remarkable points of the agreement are as follows:

a- Whoever wanted to embrace Islam without his guardian's consent could not join the Prophet (PBUH) directly during the course of the agreement. Rather, he should either hide his faith while he is still under the authority of his guardian, or leave Mecca to any other destination, except Yathrib. Most likely, when he is stricken by need, he would have to ambush Quraysh's trade caravans in order to get some provisions, which would indirectly undermine the economic power of Quraysh.

b- Whoever would join Quraysh from the followers of Muhammad would not be returned to the Muslims. He definitely would either be a hypocrite or an apostate, and it is in favor for the Muslims to detect him and be wary of him. Additionally, this was a good opportunity for Muslims to have allies in the enemy's country.

c- Whoever wished to ally with Muhammad, he could do so, and whoever wanted to ally with Quraysh, he could do so. At that time, Quraysh was the center of power in the Arabian Peninsula, and most Arab tribes respected it, either out of fear or for the sake of maintaining mutual interests. This agreement relieved the Arab tribes from the pressure of Quraysh that hindered them from siding with Muhammad (PBUH), and so made them free to ally with him.

Thus, it is clear that the Prophet's policy surpassed Quraysh's, without any compulsion. In other words, Muslims overcame Quraysh using soft diplomacy, though both had used hard diplomacy for many years without any one getting the better of the other.

2. The Prophet's Message to the An-Najâshî (Negus:)

«May Allah bless you! I praise Allah with Whom there is no deity; the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfect, the Bestower of Faith and the Overseer. I testify that 'Îsâ (i.e Jesus), the son of Maryam (i.e. Mary), is the Messenger of Allah and His Word that He cast forth to Mary the Virgin. She conceived him and Allah breathed into him of His Spirit, as He created Adam with His Hands. I call you to believe in Allah Alone, with no partners. Obey Him, follow me and believe in what is revealed to me as I am the Messenger of Allah. I sent my cousin, Ja'far, and a delegation from the Muslims. When they come to you, honor them and do not be harsh (to them). I call you and your people to believe in Allah. Hereupon, I have conveyed the message and given you advice. So, accept my advice. Peace will be upon him who follows the guidance.»

Teaching Muslims the art of the Islamic call and discourse, the Prophet (PBUH) started his message with a greeting. Then, he praised Allah by mentioning His Divine Names. Knowing that the Negus was a Christian, the Prophet (PBUH) clearly explained the Muslim's position with regard to Christianity and Jesus. Having pointed out these three points, the Prophet (PBUH) prepared the Negus to listen to a decisive word, saying:

«I call you and your people to believe in Allah. I have conveyed the message and given you advice.»

The Prophet (PBUH) ended his message with a diplomatic greeting saying:

«And peace will be upon him who follows the guidance.»

3. The Art of the Prophet's Leadership

From the Prophet's description of his Companions, we can conclude the characteristics of the Prophet's leader personality through his way of recognizing and employing the characteristics of his companions, each one of whom had qualities which were necessary in certain situations.

He, for example, described Abû Bakr As-Siddîq as being like Ibrâhîm (i.e. Abraham) in saying:

﴾...Whoever follows me verily is of (i.e. belonging to) me, and whoever disobeys me, still You (i.e. Allah) are indeed Oftforgiving, Most-Merciful.﴿ [Ibrâhîm (Abraham):36]

He also compared Abû Bakr's way of thinking to `Îsâ in saying:

﴾***If You (i.e. Allah) punish them, they are Your slaves, and if You forgive them, verily You, only You, are the All-Mighty, the All-Wise.***﴿ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table):118]

Similarly, he compared `Umar Ibnul-Khattâb's way of thinking to Nûh (i.e. Noah) who said:

﴾ ***My Lord! Leave not one of the disbelievers on the earth!*** ﴿ [Nûh (Noah): 26]

He also compared `Umar to Mûsâ (i.e. Moses) in saying:

﴾***Our Lord! Destroy their wealth, and harden their hearts, so that they will not believe until they see the painful torment.*** ﴿ [Yûnus (Jonah):88]

4. Companions' Techniques of Discourse:

a- The Prophet's Companions used to practice democracy:

Sheikh Abû Al-A`lâ Al-Mawdûdî, one of the contemporary critics of Western theories, including democracy, said in his book ***'Islamic Concepts of Religion and the State'***:

"The Companions used to advocate democracy and intellectual freedom, and urge Muslims to maintain them. None of them claimed that he was infallible. In this regard, Abû Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

«*This is my opinion; if it is right, then it is (due to the Favor) of Allah. If it is wrong, then it is mine, and I ask Allah's Forgiveness.*»

Also, `Umar Ibnul-Khattâb (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

«*Do not make a wrong opinion a tradition for the nation*».[1]

Thus, we can see that the Prophet's Companions were the pioneers of democracy, consultation and respect for others' opinions. This is clearly evident in their speeches and dialogues.

b- Merits of the Companions:

When Abû Bakr As-Siddîq (may Allah be pleased with him) heard about the Prophet's message, he went to him to verify this news. Then the following dialogue took place:

«*Abû Bakr asked, 'O Abul-Qâsim! Is this news true?' The Prophet said, 'What did you hear about me, O Abû Bakr?' Abû Bakr said, 'I heard*

(1) Al-`Alyân, p. 246-247.

that you call to monotheism and claim that you are the Messenger of Allah.' The Prophet said, 'Yes, Abû Bakr! My Lord has sent me as a bearer of glad tidings and a warner, and He has made me (the person meant by) Abraham's supplication and a Messenger to all the people.' Abû Bakr described the Messenger saying, 'By Allah! I have never seen you telling lies before. You are worthy of delivering the Message (of Islam) due to your honesty, maintenance of good relations with your kith and kin, and doing of good deeds. Stretch out your hand for me to give you allegiance.'»

Interestingly enough, these were the same merits that Khadîjah, the Prophet's wife, attributed to him when he returned from the Cave of Hirâ', where *Jibrîl* (i.e. Gabriel) delivered him the revelation. Trembling by what he had seen, the Prophet (PBUH) said to her in fright:

«*Wrap me! Wrap me!*»

She brought to him a cloak and spread it over him. When the intensity of his awe had abated, Khadîjah asked him about what happened.

The Prophet (PBUH) told her that he had met Gabriel and Allah had entrusted him with disseminating Islam to all people. Khadîjah replied:

«*Never! By Allah, Allah will never disgrace you. You keep good relations with your kith and kin, help the weak and the destitute, serve your guests generously and assist those who deserve help, who have been afflicted with calamity.*»[1]

These were the merits of the Prophet (PBUH). But what about the merits of the Companions?

Once the Meccans' oppression against the Prophet (PBUH) and his Companions intensified, he (PBUH) gave them permission to migrate to a safer place. Abû Bakr was one of them. When Ibn Ad-Daghinah knew of this, he went to Quraysh and said:

«*Do you (i.e., Quraysh) drive out a man who helps the destitute, keeps good relations with his kith and kin, helps the weak, entertains guests generously and helps the distressed?*»[2]

These are Abû Bakr's characteristics in the eyes of the Meccan Polytheists.

When some of them tried to drive him out, some Meccans offered to protect him because of his noble manners.

(1) Related by Al-Bukhârî.
(2) Related by Al-Bukhârî.

Likewise, Imâm `Alî, (may Allah be pleased with him) in the time of the dissension, used to say, "By Allah! Mu`âwiyah is not more cunning than me. Had it not been for carrying out treachery, which is detested, I would have been amongst the most cunning." Expressing his view about retinue, Imâm `Alî (may Allah be pleased with him) said:

«Do not take the advice of a miser for he will deprive you of grace and promise you poverty, nor that of a coward for he will discourage you from doing good, nor that of a penny-pinching person who will make greed seem sweet to you, out of injustice. All of these characteristics are different instincts which involve mistrust in Allah. The worst adviser is, indeed, the one who gives advice to the wicked amongst you and is a partner with them in sins. So, do not take one of them as an adviser since they are the supporters of injustice. You will find, of course, others who have the same, sound opinions but do not commit the same sins.»

We, in the meantime, should remember that our political power is very inferior when compared with our relationship to Allah and dependence on Him. He, Glorified be He, says:

﴿***And they [i.e. the disbelievers] planned, but Allah planned. And Allah is the best of planners.***﴾ [Âl-`Imrân (The Household of `Imrân): 54]

Hence, I invite myself and all Muslims to call ourselves to account. The Muslim nation is the nation of goodness, peace, security and justice.

The aforementioned examples underline that not only the merits of the infallible Prophet (PBUH) are noble, but also the merits of his Companions'.

In this regard, we remember the saying which states, "The ruler appointed to you is as (pious or as wicked as) you are."

c- Some of the Companions' famous sayings still have an effect on international public law and international relations. For instance, Abû Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) advised the army led by Usâmah Ibn Zayd saying:

«Do not betray, nor illegally take a part of the booty, nor deceive, nor mutilate bodies, nor kill a child, an aged person or a woman, nor cut a palm tree or burn it, nor cut down a productive tree, nor slaughter a lamb, cow or camel except for eating. You will find some people who have confined themselves in hermitages, so leave them to what they have confined themselves with. You will come to people who will bring you vessels that

contain different kinds of food, so if you eat from it, mention the name of Allah. You will also find other people in whose heads Satan has settled and who wrap their heads with something like headbands, so cut off these heads with swords. Go! In the name of Allah.»

This directive was delivered 15 centuries ago. We urge those concerned with international law, laws of war and Geneva Conventions to contemplate this directive and compare it with the contemporary international laws. What they find should not surprise them; it is the ethical code of the last Message of Muhammed. No good act has emerged without Islam having guided its followers to it more than fifteen centuries since the Prophet (PBUH) was sent. Here are two examples of what Muslims did when they conquered Jerusalem:

«This is what 'Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, has given to the people of Ilyâ as regards the pledge of protection: Protection of their selves, properties, crosses and all of their religious symbols. Their churches should not be inhabited nor demolished, and neither any part of them nor their crosses should be taken or damaged. They should not be coerced to change their religion.»

He, in addition, gave permission to the people of 'Anât to ring the church bells anytime and to publicly show their crosses on their feasts. (1)

Once 'Umar was invited by the Christians to pray in the church of the Holy Sepulcher. He refused for fear that Muslims may later take this as a *Sunnah* [precedent] and, subsequently, they might overcome the Christians because of their large numbers. (2)

By contrast, when the Persians defeated the Byzantines, (3) they destroyed and burned their cities and churches. The place where most Christians believed to contain the burial place of Jesus was desecrated. Furthermore, precious things, including the crucifix which Christians believed Jesus was crucified on, were looted. Persian priests celebrated their victory over the clergy.

In addition, when 'Umar, the Commander of the Faithful, sent 'Alî Ibn Umayyah to the Christians of Najran, he said to him, "Go to them and do not put them into trial with regard to their religion."

This asserts the fact that Islam promotes peaceful coexistence of cultures.

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(1) Al-'Alyân, Message to the West, Ghanya' for studies and Media, Riyadh, 2003.
(2) Ibid.
(3) Ibid.

Art of Contemporary Discourse:

1. The Western World[1]:

All people of the world remember the incitement discourse that the West adopted in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. The American President Bush, for example, described the war that he is leading as a "crusade". The gravity of the term, in fact, lies in its connotation as a war between Muslims and Christians. However, afterwards he realized the grave implication of the term.

The former British Prime Minister, Baroness Margaret Thatcher, a leading proponent of the new theory of the guarded state, which is taking the form of globalization, and a prominent leader in the second half of the 20th century, said, "Muslims should regret their mistakes and apologize for what they committed."

The Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, said that the Western civilization is vastly superior to the Islamic civilization. However, to be fair and objective, some Western thinkers and leaders gave a fair description of Islam. For instance, Bernard Lewis, the famous writer known for harboring hatred against Islam, said, "In most eras of history, religious minorities led a better life under Muslim rulers (than under other rulers)."

The British Crown Prince, Charles Philip Arthur George, also said:[2]

"The Islamic civilization has made a concerted effort to preserve a sound and comprehensive vision of the world, a matter the West much lacked.

Furthermore, there is much to be learned from the Islamic vision in this regard and there are many ways for enhancing mutual understanding, such as increasing the number of Muslim teachers in British schools; we, verily, need to be taught by Muslim teachers; to be taught with our hearts as well as our minds. The beginning of the third Millennium can be a milestone for a new era to establish and strengthen these relations. I hope we will not miss this golden opportunity to explore the spiritual side in our vision of the world!"

(1) See Âl Thânî, 7114 issue of Ar-Râyah.
(2) Al-`Alyân, Message to the West, Ghanya` for studies and Media, Riyadh, 2003.

2. Our Messages to the West:

After the September 11 attacks, we conveyed some messages to both Muslims in the Islamic world and to our friends in the West, in which we urged people to shun fanaticism and be prudent.

For example, concerning the Americans' capture and detention of some Muslims at the beginning of the American war against terrorism, we said:

"We cannot find any justification for the American breach of the International Public Law in its war against terrorism. Meanwhile, we cannot deny that some steps taken by the Americans are legal. As regards the international public Law, concerning the consequences of war, *Faqīhs* always raise a question: What is the rule for the nationals of an enemy state residing in a country at war with that state? In the past, these nationals were commonly detained as prisoners of war. However, they are asked today to leave or they would be expelled. It was noted that this may violate the interests of the state: the nationals may ally with the enemy. Likewise, if they were left in a state at war with the enemy, they may become fifth columnists. So, it was taken as a tradition to keep them within the nation-at-war's land under strict surveillance or to have them detained. Some countries prefer to evacuate children, women and the elderly and exchange them, if it is possible, for their citizens, without prejudice to their property. Any transgression against them would be compensated for; this is exactly what happened to the Japanese in the U.S.A during World War II. But will this continue?

Of course, it will not continue; since the USA would be the real loser. The basis upon which the U.S.A was constituted is to be the sponsor of liberty in the world and implement the open market policy, not to be a big prison!

Before the American war against terrorism, we asserted that the US should consider many things. Destruction results in nothing but destruction. Our message to the US was briefly as follows:

"Indeed, we were shocked to see that the US listed Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, Libya and Sudan as terrorism-sponsoring countries in the Middle East. This implicitly indicates that terrorism is associated with Islam, though the Americans tried to reduce the intensity of the situation by naming certain religious groups, such as As-Salafiyyah, the Muslim Brotherhood, Al-Jihad, Hezbollah…etc. However, even if the Americans were right, do these groups represent all the Muslims? The West forgot that

the number of Muslims is 1.6 billion persons, constituting 27% of the world population. It is also ignored that 60% of them are under the age of 20, and 80% of them suffer from masked unemployment, though most raw materials the world economy depends on to be found in their countries!

We draw near to the zero hour which represents the decisive state of the dialogue of civilizations. The US administration knows well its role in this dialogue. We, Muslims, neither advocate war nor approve of harming others. Conversely, Muslims all over the world were overwhelmingly grieved over the September 11 attacks against the innocent people in the USA. Does the American administration, in turn, share the same view concerning the afflictions of Muslims in the different parts of the Islamic world; especially the seven million Palestinian refugees who have been expelled from their land for more than half a century?

Does the US feel the pain and agony of one billion Muslims facing famine? What does the US expect from them? Would they fear engaging in a war, especially when they have nothing to lose?

Thus, we managed to convey two messages or discourses: the first to the Islamic world and the second to the USA.

3. The Saudi Discourse to the West:

Seen under the light of their observance of recent events, a group of Saudi discourses to the West have attracted our attention. They may be summarized as follows:[1] (1)

a. Co-existence between Muslims and People of the Book (i.e., Jews and Christians)

Both Muslims and the People of the Book believe in Allah, His Books, His Messengers, the Last Day, the afterlife, Heaven and Hell, human dignity and human eligibility to bear responsibility. Similarly, both parties believe in man's free will and freedom of choice, equity, justice, good virtues and agree on most values. Except for the whims of politicians, Muslims and Christians would live in harmony.

b. The Saudi Discourse explains that opposing the US Foreign Policy does not mean hating the Americans

The love for the American people and the hate for the American foreign policy do not mean that both attitudes are related to each other. The

(1) Ibid.

attitude towards the American people is different from that towards the American foreign policy. To illustrate, people hate the unjust American foreign policy, not the Americans. Rather, they respect this great people and their respectable values. This should be a clear fact to the Americans. President Bush amazingly inquired, "Why do they hate us?"

This question implies that people hate Americans in general.

c. Cultures are originally Complementary not Contradictory:

However, they may come into conflict if the political leaders and powers of interest want so. Conflict may arise within a single culture. Europe, for example, witnessed the most violent and long-standing conflicts within the same culture. The holy wars that broke out among the Christian sects were more violent and damaging to Christians than their wars with Muslims. The conflict between the Catholics and Protestants is still simmering in Ireland. Similarly, the American civil war was also within the Western culture, even in the same country.

However, this fact is absent from many Western minds.

d. Underlining the great value of the human soul, regardless of its culture:

In this regard, Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***...Whoever kills a soul, unless for a soul or for corruption [done] in the land, it is as if he had slain mankind entirely...***﴾ [Al-Mâ'idah (The Table):32]

Killing an innocent soul means violating the principle of freedom, which is guaranteed by all religions. However, this requires standing up to and ending all kinds of injustice and aggression!

e. Political Terrorism is a European product, not an Islamic product

Criminal terrorist organizations such as the mafia and other political groups such as the Red Brigades in Italy, the Red Action in France, the Irish Republican Army, ETA in Spain, the Baader-Meinhof gang in Germany and the violent protests in Europe and America in 1968, are European terrorist organizations and phenomena. In his book about terrorism, Eric Morris said:

"The idea of political and terrorist organizations first came into existence in the Spanish and Italian secret agencies. Subsequently, it appeared in Germany and, then, in Russia. It is ridiculous to think that the Japanese Red Army, the Black September Group or Islamic Jihad invented what was not carried out by others."

Manipulating Political Words:

In his analysis of descriptions employed by world powers, especially in the Islamic world, Bernard Louis[1] followed a distinguished approach.

Caliph:

«When Abû Bakr (may Allah be pleased with him) succeeded Allah's Messenger (PBUH), he used to be called 'Caliph of Allah's Messenger'. When 'Umar (may Allah be pleased with him) succeeded him, a man came to 'Umar and addressed him by the title 'Allah's Caliph'. 'Umar told him that it was Dâwûd (David) who used to be called so. After that, the man said, "You are the Caliph of Allah's Messenger." But 'Umar said, "It is Abû Bakr (who was called so) and he is now dead." The man, then, called him 'Caliph of the Messenger's caliph'. Thereupon, 'Umar said, "This is true but, with time, it will be too long (to say)." Hence, the man asked 'Umar, "What title do you suggest?" He replied, "You are the believers and I am your commander, so call me the 'Commander of the Believers.' »

King of the Sun: The Geostrategic location may have an impact on people's use of terms. By way of example, a French king used to pride himself of being called 'king of the sun'; since France is a rainy cold country and sunrise was seen as a good thing for the people. He wanted to be compared to the greatness of the sun.

Allah's Shadow on the Earth: On the contrary, the sun in the Middle East is not a good thing; rather, it is a bitter enemy. So the ruler cannot be compared to the sun, but as a shadow that protects people from the scorching sun. Noting how the shadow is great, some leaders wanted to be likened to the shadow that protects people from the blistering sun. So he granted himself the title of 'Allah's Shadow in the Earth'!

Young Governments: This term connotes an implicit meaning that those who have seized the power often convince people that this government is a new blood that is running in the veins of the country and is contributing substantially to its development. However, the fact is that this title remains in use even when the government gets 'older'.

In fact, the idea behind this term dates back to the European political movements such as Young England and Young Germany. Such regimes first appeared in the Middle East in Turkey, where the Young Ottomans

(1) Bernard Louis, Language of Policy, Dar Qurtubah for Publication and Documentation, Limasul, 1993.

movement was formed. This was followed by the 'Young Turks Movement' that came to power through the coup of 1908. Some centuries later, Arab leaders came to describe themselves as 'young rulers' thinking that they would earn people's respect.

His Majesty, the King: The European title 'his majesty'. In the past it was originally restricted to Allah. The first evidence for returning to the pure Islamic traditions and abandoning the title 'his majesty' can be noticed in the Saudi royal decree issued in October 1986 that replaced this title with the 'Custodian of the two Holy Mosques'. I think it was a right decision; this new title conveys the impression that the Saudi leader is the leader of the Muslim nation, at least at the moral level.

Generally speaking, there are many other titles such as 'his Highness', 'his Excellency', 'his Eminence', 'his Majesty'...etc. All of them grant moral distinction to rulers in the eyes of the lay people. The title of 'Sheikh' may be the best; it inspires maturity and wisdom of the ruler. Moreover, it instills a feeling of reverence in the young.

Terms of Assuming Authority in the Islamic World:

Pledge of allegiance is neither an election nor an oath. It consists of two stages: The person rises to power either legally or illegally. It involves two parts: the ruler and the subjects, who are often described in the books of *Sharī'ah* as 'the Muslim nation'. But, in practice, it involves a small group of people such as the courtiers, the army, the bureaucrats...etc. It would also be expected to see the religious elite in power.

Power: Pledge of Allegiance is often preceded by a complete and tight seizure of power. People, consequently, have the choice to either give a pledge of allegiance to save their lives against the looming evil of social anarchy, even if temporarily, or to rebel and throw themselves into destruction.

Philosophy of power may be summarized as follows: If there is no Imâm for a Muslim state at a certain time and an ineligible person came to power forcibly, and coerced people to obey him, then he will be the Imâm so as to keep the unity of the Muslims, no matter whether he is ignorant or disobedient, according to the preponderant view.

On the other hand, if another person rises to the Imamate forcibly and then another overthrew him, the latter takes over the Imamate and so forth.

Thus, the concept of power becomes clear according to the *Faqîhs* and the contemporary International Law. When there is a coup attempt and the insurgents oust the government, and promise not to shed blood and preserve citizens' rights; they peacefully confront their opponents, but only subdue the armed opponents and detain the opposition activists; promise to give the opposition activists independent and fair trials, to issue public amnesty and to form a provisional government; and on the internal level, they abide by all conventions and agreements signed by the deposed regime, then some legal theorists may see that such insurgents would become eligible to form a legal government.

However, if the insurgents fail to maintain security and order in the state, then they would become traitors and criminals.

I invite the reader to carefully note the big difference between the patriot and the traitor!

Method of Conveying Indirect Messages to the Authority:

We resolutely believe in taking gradual steps when carrying out discourse.

Our noble Islamic *Sharî'ah* urges us to follow gradual methods in *Da'wah* (Islamic call) and discourse. The codes of international Law correspond to our belief in this regard. We teach our students that there should be gradual steps when dealing with all international disputes. For instance, we should first resort to direct negotiations, followed by good offices then mediation. If matters become complex, the dispute should be referred to an arbitration council. If this leads nowhere, then the two parties may resort to political channels through international organizations. Then, if peaceful means failed in settling the dispute, they may resort to force or perhaps war, abiding, in the meantime, by the codes of human rights and international law.

Thus, ways leading to the assumption of authority should be gradual; confrontation sows dissension. Overthrowing authority should be the last resort.

Epilogue

In this chapter, we discussed the philosophy of discourse and focused on three sides: Firstly: the technique of Islamic discourse. Secondly: the technique of contemporary discourse. Thirdly: manipulating the political terms.

We think that we managed to show the significance of taking gradual steps when carrying out discourse and other channels of communication, such as dialogue, negotiation and even disputes arising from different cultural perspectives. The main point that we have to underline here is that we can only solve our problems through dialogue. For discourse and negotiations to proceed effectively, it is necessary that the two parties should have an equal status. Equivalence here does not mean that the two counterparts should have the same elements of power, but to be equally important in elements!

This is the right way to manage soft diplomacy. Otherwise, it is just a maneuver and deception. Embellished speeches without real reform, in my view, will not help our nation to achieve its rights peacefully. In this regard, we should remember the saying, "If we want peace, we should be strong."

Once again, we did our utmost to prepare this paper, adopting the philosophical analysis of political discourse. We followed the bjective analysis of political issues, political economy and international public law.

I end this paper by saying that if I did right then it is due to the favor of Allah. Otherwise, if I did wrong, it is due to my mistakes.

Reflections on Obsession of Islamic Discourse Reform

Dr. Sayyid Dusûqî Hasan(*)

Our religion, Islam, orders us to become acquainted with other people (i.e., non- Muslims). If they want to do good, we shall cooperate with them; if they search for a sound creed, we shall call them to Islam; and if they want to enter a pledge of alliance in order to support the oppressed, we shall give them such a pledge. But if they want to commit aggression against us, we shall defend ourselves.

Following the September 11, 2001 attacks, a stormy wind has blown up and targeted the Islamic world, countries, people and culture, putting us in the courthouse and asking us to defend ourselves against a serious crime with which we have nothing to do.

In a TV interview with ABC Channel after these attacks, I said to the announcer, "The example of the Islamic world and the US is like two football teams, but it has insisted on selecting its team as well as ours. So it has chosen for us "Bin Lâdin" as the captain of our team and "Mulla 'Umar" as our goalkeeper in addition to the rest of the list." I also said, "I do not know anything about these names. These persons collaborated with

(*) Academic and intellectual (Egypt).

the US in its first campaign against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan. The whole Islamic world does not know the true story of September 11 nor does it have any relation to it. Actually, the CIA has the complete story."

That stormy wind has accused the Muslim nation, governments, peoples, individuals and culture of terrorism. Unfortunately, this wind has succeeded in shaking the confidence of the Muslim nation about its culture.

Further, writers, governments and institutions have hastened to underline the need to reform the political discourse that caused violence in New York and all other places where there is a confrontation against an occupation or a struggle against the authority.

Thereupon, two terms have emerged along with this stormy wind that need to be reviewed: "Terrorism" and "Discourse". Both terms have been tackled in the Noble Qur'ân. Accordingly, the Muslim nation is obliged to adopt how the Noble Qur'ân tackled these two terms. But, unfortunately, this understanding is different from what is currently used in politics as well as in the culture imposed on us.

Terrorism, according to the Qur'ân, means to build up power so that the enemies of Islam will not dare wage wars against the Muslim nation. Allah, Glory be to Him, says:

﴿And prepare against them whatever you are able to do of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy...﴾ [Al-Anfâl (The Spoils):60]

That is, "terrify" here means to deter the enemies by being powerful so that they will not dare launch an attack.

Hence, terrorism, according to the Qur'ân, is to build self-power to survive in a safe world where no unjust power that respects no values or laws can launch an attack. Such an unjust power plots to achieve its criminal and selfish interests. That is why the West unanimously agrees on precluding us, using all possible means, from possessing power. So, whenever there is an attempt to possess power anywhere in our Islamic world, the West hurries up to block and eradicate it either by plotting against it or even by launching a direct war.

On the individuals' level of Faith, Allah, Exalted be He, orders His servants to fear Him for the sake of their bliss in this world and the Hereafter. Allah's righteous servants are those who worship Him with the hope of His reward and being terrified of His punishment. In the Qur'ân, the Arabic verb "*rahiba*" (to be filled with terror) implies a positive connotation which is

the fear of disobeying Allah, Glory be to Him, in our individual or communal life. This, in turn, leads us to follow the straight path.

Unlike the term "to be filled with terror", the term "discourse", in the Qur'ân, implies a negative connotation as Allah, Exalted be He, says to Nûh (Noah): ﴿***...And do not discourse with Me concerning those who have done wrong; indeed, they (are to be) drowned.***﴾ [Hûd (The Prophet Hûd):37]

Discourse here means a request as well as an emotional hope that Allah will not punish the wrongdoers by drowning them. But it is an unacceptable request.

Moreover, one of the two opponents who went to the Prophet Dâwûd (David) to settle the dispute between them said: ﴿***Indeed this, my brother, has ninety-nine ewes, and I have one ewe; so he said, "Entrust her to me, and he overpowered me with discourse.***﴾ [Sâd: 23]

The phrase ***"and he overpowered me with discourse"*** means that his brother overcame him unfairly using persuasion. Allah states the attributes of the righteous servants saying:

﴿***...And when the ignorant discourse with them (harshly), they say words of peace.***﴾ [Al-Furqân (The Criterion): 63]

The conversation of the ignorant with Allah's servants was called "discourse" due to its confused and disorganized meaning. That is why Allah, Exalted be He, has ordained His servants to utter words of peace and select responses that lead to peace as He, the Most High, says about Dâwûd:

﴿***And We strengthened his kingdom and gave him Wisdom and discernment in discourse.***﴾ [Sâd: 20]

Ar-Râzî comments on this verse saying: "The phrase ***'discernment in discourse'*** means that he was able to express all that which occurred to his mind or imagination without confusing matters."

In the Sura of An-Naba' (The Tiding), Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿ ***(From) the Lord of the heavens and the earth and whatever between them, the Most Merciful. They possess not from Him (authority) for (any) discourse.***﴾ [An-Naba' (The Tiding): 37]

This verse denotes that people cannot ask Allah, the Almighty, about the reasons of the Divine Decree with regard to themselves or the universe around them. To sum up, the term "discourse" tackled in the Glorious Qur'ân refers to an unjust argument, unjustified request or hope, or disorganized and confused speech.

Now, let us go back to the original issue; namely, the accusation of the Muslims of criminal violence and the attachment of that charge to the Islamic culture, and how the Muslims can overcome their unjustified sense of guilt.

Consider the following questions with regard to the last two centuries:

- Who committed aggression and against whom?
- Who occupied other people's land?
- Who plundered and still plunders other people's wealth?
- Who obstructed the progress of others?
- Who divided the homelands of others?
- Who pursued others' culture?
- Who terrorized others?
- Who protected the corrupt regimes and fostered them in other peoples' countries?

I do believe that the answers to these questions are very clear to every human being. With this in mind, how can we face these problems?

The only solution lies in becoming acquainted with other people. In this regard, Allah, the Almighty, says:

﴿***O mankind, indeed We have created you from male and female and made you peoples and tribes that you may know one another. Indeed, the most noble of you in the Sight of Allah is the most righteous of you. Indeed, Allah is Knowing and Acquainted.***﴾ [Al-Hujurât (The Apartments):13]

Accordingly, we should become acquainted with other people and act as follows:

- If they want to do good to humanity, we will cooperate with them in righteousness and piety.
- If they want to learn, we will teach them.
- If they search for a sound creed, we will call them to Islam.
- If we discover that they are conspiring against us, we will take care of their plots.
- If they want to commit aggression against us, we will repel them, and if they attack us, we will fight them.
- If they want the pledge of alliance in order to support the oppressed, assist the poor and maintain a good life for man, animals and plants, we will give them such a pledge.

This is what our religion, Islam, orders us to do. Thus, we should ignore the accusations of being guilty of discourse and terrorism, for both are the product of hostile intelligence agencies. But Allah, Glory be to Him, encompasses the whole knowledge of what they plot.

Content